

**SENATE**

*Tuesday, January 22, 2019*

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MADAM PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

**PAPER LAID**

Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Public Administration to the Eleventh Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee, Third Session (2017/2018), Eleventh Parliament on an Examination of the Administration and Expenditure of the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications. [*The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan)*]

**URGENT QUESTION****T&T Scholars in Jamaica****(Non-Payment of Tuition/Fees)**

**Sen. Wade Mark:** Thank you, Madam President. To the hon. Minister of Education: Having regard to recent reports of Government's non-payment of full tuition and other fees for additional scholars studying in Jamaica, can the Minister indicate when will said payments be made?

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Anthony Garcia):** Thank you very much, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*] Madam President, I am not aware that Government has decided not to pay full tuition and other fees for additional scholarship winners who are studying in Jamaica. I am not aware of that. Madam President, what I am aware of is that Cabinet has decided that with effect from September 2018, recipients of national additional scholarships who are desirous of pursuing studies at the Mona or Cave Hill campuses of the University of the West

Indies will be paid full tuition and compulsory fees applicable to the respective campus, as well as other allowances to which additional national scholarship winners are normally entitled, only if such scholars can provide evidence that they applied to the St. Augustine Campus and did not gain admission. Or, where such scholars are guaranteed a place at the St. Augustine Campus or such scholars obtained a deferral for one academic year and however opt to study at Mona or Cave Hill campuses of the University of the West Indies, they should be eligible for the payment of the tuition and compulsory fees applicable to the St. Augustine Campus. Thank you very much.

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark?

**Sen. Mark:** Madam President, can the hon. Minister indicate when will these tuition fees and other allowances be paid to those students who have received additional scholarships?

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark, try and rephrase that question in light of the answer that was given by the Minister. I will allow you to just refine what you are asking a little bit.

**Sen. Mark:** Madam President, in light of what the Minister has said, I am simply asking whether those students who have enjoyed additional scholarships and are studying at Mona, in particular, can the Minister share with us, since they are entitled to their full tuition—can the Minister share with us, have these tuition fees being met by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago?

**Madam President:** Minister of Education.

**Hon. A. Garcia:** Madam President, Sen. Mark is again confusing the issue and he is arguing from the wrong premise. Sen. Mark started off by saying and by questioning that those students have not been paid and his definite question was, why have they not been paid? Now he has veered to the other side asking, when

will they be paid? These are some of the things I do not understand with the goodly Senator. He has to be more specific. But in deference to him, Madam President, I will answer.

There are about seven such students whose parents are making a bid through the public media, through letters to the Minister, to have that situation changed. In the meanwhile, they have not accepted the additional scholarship, because if they do that, then they will have to fall right into the category where only their tuition fees will be paid that is applicable to that which is being paid at St. Augustine. Thank you very much.

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark? Sen. Ameen?

**Sen. Ameen:** Just for clarification, Madam President, can the Minister indicate the requirement for students to apply to UWI, St. Augustine and show evidence that they were not accepted there, if that is a new policy?

**Madam President:** Minister?

**Hon. A. Garcia:** Thank you very much. That is not a new policy. That policy was in existence since 2002 and it was revised in 2013. Simply, it states that once you are in receipt of an acceptance to the St. Augustine Campus, whether that acceptance has been deferred by one year or not, you have an entitlement. However, it is up to you to choose whether you are going to accept those conditions or not. Those students, through their parents, have not accepted those conditions and therefore they opted to study in Jamaica. Thank you.

### **ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan):** Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, the Government will be answering Question No. 46 and we seek a deferral of 44 and 45 for two weeks.

## ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

*The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Sen. Wade*

*Mark:*

### **Greenvale Housing Development (Refusal of Planning Permission)**

- 44.** Can the hon. Minister of Planning and Development indicate whether the Town and Country Planning Division had, at any time in the past, refused planning permission for the development of a housing community in the area now known as the Greenvale Housing Development, and if so, when and why?

### **Greenvale Estate (Details of Original Developer)**

- 45.** Can the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Development provide the Senate with the names of the original developer of the Greenvale Estate and the cost paid by the Government to acquire the estate from that developer?

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

### **Teachers' Wage Negotiations (Details of)**

- 46. Sen. Wade Mark** asked the hon. Minister of Education:
- Having regard to the public statement made in June 2018 by the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association (TTUTA) that teachers will be asked to withhold their labour if the Chief Personnel Officer fails to commence wage negotiations within the coming months, can the Minister indicate:
- i. have negotiations commenced;
  - ii. if not, when are they expected to commence; and

- iii. what measures have been put in place to avert possible industrial action if such negotiations are not commenced?

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Anthony Garcia):** Thank you very much, Madam President. Allow me to begin by stating that salary negotiations that affect terms and conditions of service of teachers—members of the teaching profession—do not fall within the remit of the Ministry of Education. That is the business of the Chief Personnel Officer who gets instructions from the Minister of Finance. However, Madam President, wage negotiations have commenced between the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association and the Chief Personnel Officer, according to information that we have received. And I am being very clear, “according to information that we have received”, because we are not engaged in those discussions.

However, Madam President, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to the collective bargaining process once consideration on TTUTA’s wage proposals have been completed by the Chief Personnel Officer and counter-proposals are developed. In the event that negotiations are not commenced and industrial action is taken, the Ministry of Education will utilize existing protocols led by the school administration at affected schools to ensure that all our students are adequately tutored. Thank you very much.

**1.40 p.m.**

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark.

**Sen. Mark:** Can the hon. Minister indicate how far from his knowledge negotiations have reached between the parties with a view to arriving at a new collective agreement?

**Madam President:** Minister.

**Hon. A. Garcia:** Madam President, it is difficult sometimes for me to understand

Sen. Mark's thinking. I just said those negotiations do not fall within the remit of the Ministry of Education. The responsibility for those negotiations lies solely and squarely with the Chief Personnel Officer who is directed by the Ministry of Finance and, therefore, to ask me how far the negotiations have reached, I cannot answer that question. Sen. Mark, being a former trade unionist, should be well aware of that procedure. Thank you.

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark.

**Sen. Mark:** Madam President, would the hon. Minister want us to defer asking any further questions to him and maybe direct our questions to the Minister of Finance instead? Would you prefer that?

**Madam President:** No. Sen. Mark, I think you asking the Minister a question through me, and that question does not arise.

**Sen. Mark:** Could the hon. Minister indicate—when he mentioned that the Ministry will put in place the relevant and necessary protocols to ensure that education runs smoothly and not disruptively, could you elaborate for the Senate please?

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark, I would not allow that.

**Sen. Mark:** No, he did. He said that.

**Madam President:** He did, but I not think that that question is relevant to the original question that you asked.

**Sen. Mark:** I thought it was arising from what he said.

**Madam President:** Yes, and from the—*[Interruption]*

**Sen. Mark:** So can I go outside of that, Ma'am?

**Madam President:** You have one more question that you can ask.

**Sen. Mark:** Can I ask the hon. Minister whether from his knowledge he expects that negotiations between the parties, which is critical, to be consumed and

concluded within the time frame allotted under the collective bargaining process? Can the hon. Minister share with us his thinking and knowledge on this matter because you are not fully involved but you may have little knowledge of it?

**Madam President:** Minister.

**Hon. A. Garcia:** Thank you very much, Madam President. Sen. Mark is asking me to predict. I do not have a crystal ball where I can predict accurately. I do not. I cannot. And secondly, Madam President, I have been saying all the time this evening that I do not have a handle on negotiations. However, if the situation arises where the Ministry of Education has to take or has to put things in place to ensure that our students are adequately served in the school, we certainly will do that. Thank you.

**Sen. Mark:** Madam President, may I enquire, question No. 49 on the Order Paper which was due on the 30<sup>th</sup> of the 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018, could you give us an update as to where we are on this matter?

**Madam President:** Leader of Government Business.

**Sen. Khan:** Madam President, it is my understanding that the Minister of Public Administration is awaiting on a legal opinion as to whether this information could be made available.

**Sen. Mark:** Madam President, you would realize that was a similar answer we got just about a year ago and I cannot understand, Madam President, through you, how a legal opinion could take that length of time. And, Madam President, may I just engage you for one second to let you know a similar question was posed by the PNM in Opposition and they were given a big bundle in response. So I do not understand, Madam President, why this is taking so long. [*Desk thumping*] A whole year, Madam President.

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark, you are aware that as the Presiding Officer I have

no control over the answers. We have followed through on the process and I believe that you were furnished with a copy of the information received from the Minister of Public Administration. Am I right?

**Sen. Mark:** No. Not in this session, no.

**Madam President:** All right. I will clarify that and at the next sitting or even before I will have chat with you about it.

**CLOSURE OF PETROTRIN REFINERY  
(CONDEMNATION OF GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS)**

[Second Day]

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [November 27, 2018]:*

*Be it resolved* that the Senate take note of the failure of the Government to disclose a viable and credible plan to address the needs of those persons/business affected by the closure of the refinery;

*And be it further resolved* that this Senate condemn the actions of the Government in closing the Petrotrin refinery.

*Question again proposed.*

**Madam President:** On the said Tuesday, the 27<sup>th</sup> of November, 2018, there were seven speakers including the mover of the Motion. Sen. Thompson-Ahye, I now call on you to resume your contribution. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. H. Thompson-Ahye:** Thank you, Madam President. The flare that once burnt bright lighting up the Pointe-a-Pierre night signifying the Petrotrin refinery was near extinguished, a beacon of hope replaced by despair. [*Desk thumping*]

The Ramdeen Motion states in part that the decision to close the Petrotrin refinery will have direct adverse consequences on thousands of persons as well as the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. Who are these persons and what are the

adverse consequences? The former US Vice-President, Hubert Humphrey states:

“...the moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped.”

All of these groups are impacted by the decision to close Petrotrin. Within these groups we have different subgroups. We have the permanent Petrotrin workers, we have the temporary workers and we have the retirees, and all of these workers are impacted by the decision to close Petrotrin.

Within the elderly group we have parents, grandparents and other dependents. We have the sick and even those who are handicapped. One worker may be dealing with multiple groups of dependents. We cannot assume that the elderly have finished their mortgages, we cannot assume that they do not have children, because there are elderly people who have quite young children. We have heard time and time again follow the money, and sometimes people take that quite seriously, especially women, and they followed the money by going with men who they think have money and hoping for a better life. And sometimes there are multiple wives, multiple families arising out of this situation, and you have, of course, a multiplicity of children. So sometimes one person may be dealing with the several homes and they have to provide for these homes. So we have also lots of what we call “help children”.

You know, Madam President, I always try to educate my clients, but sometimes my clients educate me and I am always grateful. Because I was doing a divorce and the woman came to check with me the petition we were going through and she had in tow a young child and I said to her, “You are babysitting.” She is,

“No, that is my child.” I looked at the petition, it was nowhere there in the list of children, and I said, “But how could this be?” She said, “It is not my husband’s child. That is help.” And I said, “What do you mean?” She said, “Well, I went to get help and I get this child.” So I learnt about “help children”.

I just want to advise that that is something that is very real in the society, because in many societies people believe that parliamentarians who they have voted for, they must seek help from them and sometimes children come out of that help situation, and there are concrete examples which I will not reveal today. So we have the immediate consequence of the economic deprivation and these groups of children and wives will be impacted differently.

I spoke on the last occasion of the general comment of the United Nations’ child rights committee, No. 16, General Comment (2013) entitled, “The State obligation regarding the impact of the business sector on children’s rights”. Now, children are rights holders and they are stakeholders in businesses. They are future employees. I was talking to a senior person at Petrotrin recently and she said to me, “You know, one of the elderly workers said ‘I was looking forward to my child coming to join us at Petrotrin as I came and joined my father, and now that is something out of the question’.” Do forgive me, Madam President, but I meant very early to say that I have a very personal interest in this issue; very personal interest. So when I speak about the retirees, I have a retiree in my house. I attended the funeral of a retiree yesterday, my brother-in-law, and many times I cook, I cook in a Petrotrin pot—because when the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary came around—award ceremony—I get a list and I was told what do you want? Sometimes I may choose jewellery, a pendent with a diamond—well the thief took that—but I still have my pot. So I cook in a Petrotrin pot because I am married to a retiree, and I

have gone through the whole list, Texaco, Petrotrin, whatever. My brother-in-law was Trinmar and I heard the Petrotrin people talking yesterday glowingly about him, and he was handling the payroll. A very calm accountant and he retired two years ago, so he is not in that.

We talk a lot about the benefiting from Petrotrin and the people are well paid, so I know a little about what they speak, a little, and because I understand the difference between planned retirement and retirement that was foisted upon you, I can feel for those workers. Because when it is planned, and we opted for planned voluntary retirement, there were programmes, there were lectures, there was counselling and the experts said things like, "You know if you go home, your wife would be fed up of having you in the house whole day because you would no longer be working." Of course, they do not understand all wives are not the same, and some wives like me can always find things for somebody to do once they are in the house.

**Hon. Senator:** All wives.

**Sen. H. Thompson-Ahye:** Not all. All right. So we have a situation where you have a number of things that are happening with adults and with children, and I spoke about abuse of children as a factor that may arise out of the loss of employment, the loss of that sense of manhood and frustration. So that you have the physical abuse and you also have the verbal abuse, and we do not—some of us are old enough to remember a calypso called "Child Training" by the Mighty Composer, recently deceased, and he said, "Here was the mother talking to the child, 'Your father ain't gih me ah X cent. Tomorrow ah have to pay de X rent'." So here is a child, the parent is unable to provide—the father—and the child is being abused because of something that the child has no control. So you are going

to have the verbal abuse.

I spoke also about domestic violence, or sometimes called “intimate partner violence” and the impact on the spouses, and sometimes people think that is very remote and it is not real because men do not automatically lose jobs and begin to beat their wives. I would be the last one to say that that is the cause because I understand that domestic violence—and this is what I teach my students—is a power and control issue, but you have various triggers and one of the triggers may be that loss of the sense of control over your financial resources, the loss of the breadwinner role, and there have been studies. For example, one came out of the Barcelona School of Economics in April 2007 in a paper “Unemployment and intimate-partner violence: A gender-identity approach” written by Ana Prats, and she showed in her study the causes and effects of unemployment on intimate partner violence. She said it was important to study these things, to study the cultural values and the gender-related problems that explained the cultural and economic behavioural outcomes.

So if we know exactly what was happening and we know what is to come, we know how to provide. So what is happening in terms of the employee programme at Petrotrin? How is the Prime Minister's Office and Gender and Child Affairs catering for that fallout of domestic violence problems? Is there anything we are putting place; or is it that the Petrotrin place up at Richmond Street there, near to me, if it is still functioning with the same degree of input from who is taking it up, the now defunct company. So all of these things one has to look at because we need to design policies based on the research of what can happen and may very well happen.

Studies also coming out from Canada talk about a decrease in female

unemployment and the challenges in male employment. So sometimes it works. There was also an English study that said you know it is not always that the women become the breadwinners and the men are going to take advantage of them, because we now in society sometimes the women cannot even control her own resources. The man would take the money from her or may not want her to work. But in some instances the man seeing the woman working has a different mindset and he becomes more pliant, more obedient, because he knows he can be put out of the house because she is the one with the resources. So it depends a lot on the society, the values of the society, how much patriarchy is entrenched, because we know that in spite of when we look around we see so many women who are Permanent Secretaries and we say well women are moving up. Women are moving up in the world, we are doing very well, but sometimes very powerful women inside of the offices are not powerful in their homes. The same thing for men. Sometimes men are very powerful outside, in the office, and at home—  
[*Interruption*]

**Sen. Obika:** They never cough.

**Sen. H. Thompson-Ahye:** Thank you very much, Mr. Obika. Confession is good for the soul. [*Laughter*]

So we have a number of situations that can arise out of the situation at Petrotrin, but as I said before, the question of the retirees is one that has engaged a number of people in the society and especially that question of the health issues.

Now, I saw an advertisement in the newspaper from the credit union saying, “Come and join up”. So one day you see an advertisement saying “Come and join the credit union” another day you see another advertisement saying, “Come to the company and sign up if your surname begins with A or your surname begins with

B". So it is a lot of confusion at times as to what is happening, what to do, where to go.

Now, the question of the uncertainty about the health issue is something that is very, very important. Because you have patients who have to get dialysis treatment as a regular feature, who have heart problems and they are accustomed going to the clinic periodically so that they can have their needs attended to—their medical needs—and it was not only a question of going for a health check-up you know. It was a question where these persons who used to work together for many years, sometimes over 35 years, 40 years, and they had a way of bonding together. So the boys—they call them “boys” even though they are over 60—they would meet and they would talk about their grandchildren, they would talk about their wives, they would talk about what are you doing with yourself, and it was a way of camaraderie. So you were hearing about you know Sookraj has another grandchild, and you know Ramsingh child just got out of university. So all of these things—and when you have elderly people who are able to talk with other people, it really helps with the quality of their lives, because a lot of people grow old and that loneliness, not having friends to talk to, really shortens their lives. So when they met at the health clinic and they exchanged notes, that was a way of bonding together and improving their quality of life.

Insofar as the children are concerned, we talk about children who are disabled, and there was actually, I understand, a school on the compound. So you did not only have St. Peter's for the children formerly of the expat, but you had children who have special needs and they were catered for. What has happened to that school now on the compound? I understand there was a pool because I spoke to somebody who has recently retired, and she was telling me there is a pool that

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people could have gone and bathe in that pool. There was a golf course which catered for everybody and they say it is not like in Port of Spain where certain people go to the golf course. Anybody could have gone to Petrotrin. I do not know. I did not live there. So there were many benefits that are being lost and impacting the quality of life of the various people who have suffered by the closure of Petrotrin.

What I hear from the people with whom I speak, because I speak to different professionals, is that it is not just the closure, the fact of it, because they saw that something was going to happen. They had heard that something would happen, but it was the suddenness of it. When you have a rug pulled from under you, or you are going to sit comfortably in a chair and somebody removes that chair, you have damage potential, damage to your coccyx. But when it is something like that that happens, the suddenness on the closure, it hurts your heart because you do not know what is happening, when it is happening. So you really needed more information, Madam President, and more consultation to try your best to stave off the economic loss and to prepare for the loss of your job from Petrotrin. So in terms of the economics, the cultural—because we have heard that even the steel band is no longer going to be sponsored. So we have all of these groups that are impacted by the loss of the Petrotrin factor.

Now, sometimes “The words don’t come out right” the song says, “The words don’t come out right”, and what is intended is not what is received. So when you are told that we have to consider not just the few in Petrotrin but also the entire society, the message can be received that, just me? I am just one person. I am just two, I am just a few, I am not important. And then people think back about when election time is coming around and we get a different message that every

single vote is important, and some of us may remember when Mr. Manning's political life hung in the balance, was hanging in the balance on one or two votes. So it was very important. Every single vote is important, and if every single vote is important then I would expect as a person that I would be considered and my needs would be considered.

Now I have seen, so perhaps it is a good thing, that we had a hiatus, a softening of the approach and we are hearing about things that are being put in place, houses and land for ex-Petrotrin workers. So whereas we can say there is perhaps a little shining light at the end of the tunnel, there might be something on the horizon, we do not expect that flare to go up in a hurry. Coming back from the wake the other night there was darkness so it was very different and eerie, so we do not know Pointe-a-Pierre as we knew it before and, in fact, it is going to take some time for people to come to terms to living a new way and preparing to live a life. It is not a life of luxury as so many people believe because we talk about good salaries, and so on. We talk about all the overtime when the Cat Cracker unit is down and people are making money, but nobody talks about the risk. How many people would know a colleague, a compère who is with you, and the next thing you know there is an explosion of a compressor and he becomes a fiery being and then he is no more.

Nobody talks about the risk. They talk only about the salary. So that once you are in the refinery there is always a risk involved. We do not know when a worker goes out to work in the morning if that worker will return at night because anything can happen; and I know it is not only in one industry, it can happen in other industries. But we know about waiting, and hoping, and not being able to sleep, and then hearing the next morning bring pyjamas to Augustus Long. So it is

a situation where people have sacrificed, have suffered risk to bring a benefit to the society and nobody at any point has said to them, "Thank you. Thank you for what you have done. Thank you for the risk that you have suffered". And some of these things are long term. Who has done a study about the health risk, the permanent health challenges suffered by these workers? Do we know? Do we know what risk, what attendant ills have been passed on to children, or what they are suffering themselves?

So there has been consequential damage and people have suffered, and it has been a sad day for many people. Some people were fortunate as I said and were out of the company before. Some people were hoping to get in and will no longer be able to get in. So that succession plan is no longer viable.

And the quality of life for many people will no longer be the same. Everybody cannot get a job, everybody cannot be an entrepreneur. We have to be creative and perhaps this is an opportunity for people who are business leaders, and I see the mover of the Motion being very interested, perhaps, sharing the wealth with other people who are less fortunate. Try to see what we can do for the children, try to see what we can do for those people who are going to suffer the fallout of this situation that has occurred.

**2.10 p.m.**

So it has been a very traumatic time for many. We are hoping that everything would be resolved. We are hoping that all the consequences will be understood and that at the end of the day, we will still have some hope returned to the society. So we will have patience but we are asking that we do not wait too long, and that there be compassion and understanding for people who are not readily thought of as the victims of this situation. And I thank you. [*Desk*

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*thumping]*

**The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Allyson West):** Thank you, Madam President, for allowing me the opportunity to participate in this debate. Madam President, I am a proud member of San Fernando so I grew up with the pride and hope that was propelled by the existence of Texaco first followed by Petrotrin. I have family who worked at Petrotrin. I have a brother who was in charge of the cat cracker and was the one who they called out when there was a problem and he actually was injured in an accident, a blow-up at the cat cracker years ago. So I am personally aware of all of the issues that would have been raised during the contribution of Sen. Thompson-Ahye.

And I can tell you, based on my personal experience, it is not that we are not aware of the issues. It is not that we are not caring of the issues or concerned about the employees. It is that we were faced with a very tough decision that had to be made and what we tried to do was implement the decision that was made in a way that would not be too traumatic on each of the employees. So to remind you of what we faced in making that decision that led us to the place where we are, let me take you back to some of the basic facts.

There was a decline in crude oil prices. Crude oil prices within recent times reached a high of US \$108 a barrel in 2014, went down to a low of US \$26 a barrel in 2016. We had a resulting collapse in petroleum revenues, revenues from the petroleum sector which reached a high of \$19 billion in 2014 and a low of \$1.5 billion in 2016, aggravated by the combination of generous tax incentives on the one hand and a significant drop in production on the other. We had a petroleum sector that, in 2014, contributed 30 per cent of our total national revenue and by 2016, contributed only 2.3 per cent of that revenue. That is the scenario with

which we were faced.

In respect of Petrotrin in particular, there were two major problems that created the economic circumstances for that company, and those two major problems were: There was no exploration for oil and very little focus on the exploration and production part of the business. All the focus was put on the refinery including all the finances and investments but notwithstanding that, the refinery continued to be a loss-making entity. So those were the two major issues faced by Petrotrin. As a result of that combination of issues, what we had was indebtedness created in the business of Petrotrin of \$12 billion. Petrotrin owes \$12 billion in respect of its two major debts. Almost half of that is due in August 2019.

If you look at the profile of the company, there was little prospect of the company being able to settle that debt—I would say no prospect of the company being able to settle that debt without state support. And as you would have concluded from the discussions we have been having in the Senate, the State is itself in a situation where it is seeking to recover from the downturn that has occurred in the economy over the last couple of years. So we are now crawling out that hole and to take on Petrotrin's debt in this scenario would have been a significant burden on the State and we were advised that non-settlement of the debt would not only negatively impact Petrotrin but it would very likely lead to a downgrade of Trinidad and Tobago's ratings with the international lending agencies which would have increased our borrowing cost.

Petrotrin had \$19 billion in cost overruns. It had a wage bill of \$2.2 billion a year. It had a medical plan that cost \$245 million a year. It required to operate the refinery 100,000 barrels of oil a day but only produced itself 40,000 of that 100,000, and for every barrel of oil that it needed in excess of what was produced

locally, it had to import that and it incurred a loss. So the average loss of that company in respect of those purchases was \$3 million a day.

So for the years 2014 to 2017, the company incurred losses. Even when the price of oil was at its peak at \$108 a barrel in 2014, the company produced a loss of \$201.3 million. It had unpaid taxes and royalties of \$3.5 billion. Not only did it not pay to the State the royalties that were due from its own exploration activity, even royalties collected from sub-lessees that were paid by sub-lessees were not remitted to the State because the money was used for Petrotrin's day-to-day operations. If it was to continue, it needed to upgrade the refinery because the quality of the refined product would not have been saleable in a couple of years. So it would have needed a minimum of \$7 billion to upgrade the refinery to produce a product that could have been sold on the international market or it would have lost its market.

There was little to no investment in infrastructure. So we have ageing plant, an ageing supporting infrastructure and there is evidence of that in the oil spills that have been experienced and we have been very fortunate that those oil spills have not been more problematic and more widespread and more damaging than they have been.

So Petrotrin was operating on a business model that was obsolete and uncompetitive and unsustainable. To continue to operate Petrotrin in the state that it was in would have required a cash injection estimated to be \$25 billion. That is half of the national budget as reduced under this administration. And despite the injection of \$25 billion, we were advised by the persons who looked at the projections that even if we had contributed the \$25 billion to shore up Petrotrin to get it back to a state where it could operate, it would continue to lose \$2 billion a

year. This is what we were advised. So what we had was an industry that was severely crippled and could only be sustained by either significant state support which the State could not afford or it required restructuring.

So those were the facts that faced the Government from the time it came into office. It undertook an exercise to review the operations of Petrotrin and to determine what were the viable options. Lots of people have said that there was no warning that anything was going to happen but I will remind my colleagues in this House and the national community that the Prime Minister would have raised these issues as early as January of 2017 when he made an address to the nation on this issue, and indicated that we had serious concerns about Petrotrin and its operations and its future and we were going to look to see what could be done to put the country in a state where it would no longer be burdened by this thing that is Petrotrin.

I think that, as Trinidadians, what we tend to do is not accept the inevitable until it becomes absolutely inevitable. So the people who say they have no warning may possibly had been in that position. They thought it was just talk and we would have not have acted but we did not have a choice but to act. So having done the reviews, having got the advice, having taken all the options into consideration, it was decided that we have no choice but to stop operating this loss-maker that is the refinery. Because without the significant injection of funds which we did not have, the refinery just could not be sustainable. So that was the first decision.

We decided, secondly, that rather than importing petroleum to refine at a loss, we would increase and improve our exploration and production focus to improve the output of crude oil and we would sell that to foreign locations and earn

foreign exchange rather than expending foreign exchange on the purchase and importation of crude oil. And since we were no longer going to be refining crude oil, we would import the petroleum products that we required for local consumption. So we would move from a situation where we were importing 100,000 barrels a day to manufacture refined product and we would instead import 25,000 barrels a day to satisfy local needs. We would try to increase our production from 40,000 barrels a day to perhaps 60,000 or even more and export that and earn foreign exchange, giving us a net foreign exchange benefit.

So when we looked at that configuration, the company was comfortable having looked at all the figures and done their projections, that we could turn Petrotrin from the loss-maker and drain that it was into a profitable company that could benefit not only the region in which it operates but also the whole country.

I said I was a proud southerner and when I lived in south, San Fernando was booming, it was bright, it was growing, it was developing. In the last couple of years when I have driven down to San Fernando, I have been distressed by the fact that San Fernando seems to me to be turning into more and more of a shanty town, because there is no growth, there is no development. You are not seeing the prosperity that the old Texaco and Petrotrin brought at the time. So that, to me, was a reflection of what was happening with the company that was the leading industry in the area and it needs an injection if San Fernando itself is to survive and continue to grow as it was in the past. So those were the decisions that were taken.

And as I said, it was not taken in a callous way. We appreciated that employees would have been impacted and what we tried to do was soften the blow for those employees and create other opportunities. So let us look at the decisions that we have taken and the steps that we have taken to ease the burden on the

employees that have been impacted. We have been advised that the companies in total employed 3,400 permanent employees and 1,500 temporary and casual employees. As we would have seen from the closure of ArcelorMittal, there is a clear position in the legislation that on the closure of a company, severance payments are not due because it is not seen as a redundancy, but we did not seek to rely on that because we wanted to provide support to the employees. So what we did was we agreed to pay termination packages not only to the permanent people but also to temporary and casual persons. The size of the termination package was \$2.6 billion, at an average per employee of \$520,000.

In addition to that, the new companies—there are four companies that have been set up to replace the previous Petrotrin. Two of them are going to be active companies; that is Heritage which is the company that is going to be engaging exploration and production, and Paria which is going to be the company that will be importing and selling product and exporting product. Those companies will employ at least 1,000 employees directly.

In addition to that, those companies, both of them, will be outsourcing in the technical field in terms of logistics, field operations, security workers and so on. They will also be outsourcing non-technical support in terms of maintenance, janitorial work, landscaping, auto repairs, machine shop and so on. So that a lot of the people who were terminated and a lot of people in the fence-line areas who would have been negatively impacted by the closure of Petrotrin would have the opportunity both for direct re-employment and also for opportunity for outsourcing directly with those companies.

In terms of what the employees qualified for on the termination of employment, of the 3,400 permanent employees, almost half of them qualified for

pension as at December 01, 2018. So these 1,343 employees would not only have received their termination payments but they would also have received the lump sum due under the pension plan and be entitled to their monthly pension payments. The company had an Employee Assistance Programme in place and it beefed up that programme for the purpose of dealing with the trauma that we knew would arise out of the terminations and to address all the issues and provide the support that the employees needed.

So in terms of that support, for the period up to December 31<sup>st</sup>, there have been 112 group interventions attended by 1,586 participants. There have been group financial workshops to advise people on options that they have for investments and for savings and for seeking alternative job opportunities and so on. There have been 63 group financial workshops, attended by 964 participants. There have been individual and family financial counselling, 95 of those. There have been individual and family counselling. So we have financial counselling and we have other family counselling to deal with potential things like domestic abuse arising out of frustration of the breadwinner, the breadwinner no longer being employed and so on. So we have provided and we continue to provide the support the company does because we do appreciate that there are challenges that are being faced by people who wake up one morning and no longer have a job.

In looking at this issue, I also considered the fact because we tend to operate on the assumption that all the people working at Petrotrin would be traumatized by the loss of their jobs. But of the 3,400 permanent employees, for example, half of them, more than half of them, actually 2,000 of them, are millennials, and what the studies have shown is that millennials do not stick around in one job for life, they move around. [*Crosstalk*] So, in a publication by Harvard education profession,

written by a gentleman by the name MacKenzie Kassab, he said this:

“The future is here: millennials have taken over the workforce. They are tech savvy, adaptable, and creative. But they also have a unique set of expectations and demands.”

And he said that on average—in:

“...a 2015 study by the Education Advisory Board...”—of the US—  
“suggests that millennials will job hop up to 20 times in their career, about twice as many times as their baby boomer counterparts.”

So what we have are a group of people who are not committed to stay in a job for life. They welcome the opportunity for change and trying new things.

So, imagine in a context of a person who is thinking, “Well I will stay here for a couple of years and then move” and he is moving with a lump sum that he would not otherwise have got. So he may not be as adverse to the idea of this termination as other people who, when we went into a job, when I first joined the workforce, the normal worker would say, “Okay, I am going into this job and I will stay there forever”. There is a large percentage of the Petrotrin workforce that may not have been of that ilk. So their approach to the termination may not have been as dire as we would anticipate that they otherwise have been.

So in the financial counselling that we would have provided, not only would we have spoken to them about job opportunities in the company and outside of the company but we would have reminded them of certain government investment programmes that they might have wished to take advantage of, having regard to the fact that they have this lump sum, either with the company or in the national community.

So, as I said, in addition to the company re-engaging 1,000 people, it would

also be outsourcing work. It would be going out to have people operate lease operatorships. You have people coming out of Petrotrin who have expertise in that area. So an opportunity, for example, would present itself to them, either alone or in groups, to invest in equipment and take part in those opportunities because the company is going to be seriously embarking on exploration and production activity. There is that.

There is the HDC housing incentive where the HDC pays an individual who gets involved in this housing programme, produces houses for sale to people on the HDC qualifying list. So you build a house to HDC spec, you have a guaranteed purchaser because the HDC has a list of 176,000 applicants. You get paid within a short time by TTMF who provides the financing for most of these and in addition to that, you can get up to \$100,000 on each housing unit that you produce.

You have the agricultural incentive programme where there is a similar incentive. You have, as I said, drilling teams and other outsourcing opportunities. So we have these opportunities that people can take advantage of them. They would have had, many of them, attractive lump sums that would give them the opportunity to invest in these things.

In addition to that the Government, recognizing the importance of Petrotrin to the southern area, deliberately took a decision to focus a lot of its spend in 2019 and 2020 in the southern area. So my colleagues, further on in the debate, would develop these points more but we have mentioned before that we have the La Brea dry-docking facility which we expect to come on-stream in the not-too-distant future. We have the Phoenix Park Industrial Park which we expect construction to occur during 2019 which will provide jobs during 2019, during the construction and thereafter in the manufacturing facilities that are set up.

We also are, finally, starting the San Fernando waterfront project which would also, one, lift San Fernando and two, provide further opportunities for jobs. So we did not just callously say “Let us send people home and we do not care about them”; we considered what options these people would have for life after Petrotrin and we are firmly of the view that there is a lot of opportunity for life after Petrotrin, and we are seeking to counsel them through this transition.

So the Motion, Madam President, talks about the adverse impact of the closure on the employees and yes, we admit that there is an adverse impact on the employees but we have put things in place and we continue to put things in place. And what I did not mention which Sen. Thompson-Ahye mentioned was the Prime Minister's undertaking that we would provide land and housing to former employees of Petrotrin as well to provide them with further relief and support. So while we acknowledge that there is an adverse impact on having your job terminated, we have tried to put things in place to reduce as far as possible that adverse impact.

The Motion also refers to the adverse impact of the closure of Petrotrin on the economy and this, I refute wholeheartedly. In fact, the maintenance of Petrotrin in the way that it was operating would have been the thing that would have produced the adverse impact on the economy. As I said, the company operating the way it did up to the end of October would not have been able to settle its debt in August 2019.

**2.40 p.m.**

The Government was not going to be easily in a position to settle that debt in August of 2019. Default was a real possibility; default would have led to a downgrade. That would have produced a significant adverse impact on the

economy that would have impacted all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, not just the 3,400 people in Petrotrin. Not that I am not saying they are not important. What I am saying is that we have to look at the whole picture and take all our citizens into account in making these decisions.

So the portion of the Motion that talks about an adverse impact on the economy from the closure of Petrotrin, I refute wholeheartedly. In fact, the projections show that Petrotrin will turn around—sorry, the new operations of the new companies, Heritage and Paria, will produce profits rather than the losses that have been generated over the years. They will be able to generate foreign exchange, they will generate profits, they will pay taxes, they will pay dividends. In fact, the projections of Petrotrin look so positive that Petrotrin is confident that on its own, it can refinance and settle the debt that is due in 2018 without government support, without government guarantee.

So that, we do not expect an adverse impact on the economy from the decision that has been taken. It was a difficult decision, Madam President. We did not make it lightly, we looked at all the issues, we considered the implications, and we took the decision that we thought we had no choice but to take.

So, Madam President, as our Senate prayer indicates, we looked at the matter and decided the matter with honesty, courage and conviction. We are confident that we took the right decision. We are confident that the people of Trinidad and Tobago will soon see the positive impact on that decision, and we will continue to support the employees through the transition into the new phase in their lives. [*Desk thumping*] I thank you, Madam President.

**Sen. Wade Mark:** [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much. Madam President, I want to agree with the hon. Minister when she said that the people will soon see

the reality of the decisions that the Government has taken, and they will not put them behind their backs. I think when they see and experience and understand the reality, they will take a decision with this index finger and place the PNM behind their backs. [*Desk thumping*] That is what they will do.

Madam President, I want to tell this honourable Senate in here today that all that we have been told by the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, the Prime Minister—who is not here but who has pronounced on this matter—is a narrative that has been fashioned and shaped to mamaguy, fool and mislead the population. We have done our analysis, and it is at variance, Madam President, with what the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is saying in this Senate. They have not as yet confessed to the country the real reason for shutting down Petrotrin. [*Desk thumping*] But Madam President, as our grandfathers and mothers used to tell us, time is longer than twine.

I will tell you what the analysis tells me and tells us. Three reasons the Government closed down Petrotrin and not those reasons that they are giving us. Madam President, you would remember, and I will go into that in a short while, that they paid a company called McKinsey, almost I think, US \$15 million and I am told no report was produced. They came in this Senate, I asked the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries whether a report was produced by McKinsey for 15 or 16 million US dollars, and we were told no report was produced. Our information is that a report was produced by McKinsey, but they never supplied the country with the report that McKinsey produced.

So, Madam President, let me tell you what are the reasons. You know, Mahatma Gandhi talked about deadly sins, and this is a deadly sin that they have committed against the population. We have surmised, we have concluded, based

on our research, three reasons. The first, they wanted to destroy the OWTU and that powerful union in that company called Petrotrin, and in the process, undermine and weaken that union and put their membership on the breadline. So they can now hire scabs. So it is slavery again in T&T, PNM style, Madam President. So they hire who they want, when they want, at whatever price they offer the workers—first reason.

The second reason, Madam President, is that the Government wanted to destroy all the evidence, all the documentation surrounding the A&V Oil and Gas fake oil scandal. [*Desk thumping*] So that, Madam President, there will be nothing to show when the demand is made for the evidence. Where is the evidence? They do not have it. Gone, Madam President. That is the second reason they wanted to shut down Petrotrin. They never forgave Petrotrin for leaking that information.

And, Madam President, the third reason is what I will come to in a short while and give you some details. This decision to shut down the refinery, and to shut down Petrotrin by extension, is to open the door to people to import oil with shady characters—and I will tell you some of them in a short while—who are facilitating the importation of refined products into our country, no procurement process. And, Madam President, we are talking about a refinery that is valued at close to six—I think it is about \$40 billion to \$50 billion.

So at the end of the day, what will happen is that the PNM will use the absence of procurement in order to build a war chest to facilitate, Madam President, activities that have landed a lot of people in jail, in a country called Brazil, in an operation called Operation Car Wash, Madam President, because they funnelled the money through the middlemen as managers and then it ended up in the pockets of politicians for electioneering. That is the third reason that they shut

down Petrotrin. They want to develop a war chest, using middlemen in order to funnel moneys into their war chest for the 2020/2019 general elections.

Madam President, you know if you go right now and you google [www.petrotrin.com](http://www.petrotrin.com), this page does not display, this page cannot be displayed. Madam President, the PNM has shut down the website of Petrotrin. [*Desk thumping*] I challenge anybody now to go on the website and google [www.petrotrin.com](http://www.petrotrin.com) and you will see nothing emerging. However, if you google Petrotrin financial audit, you will see something coming up, but they send you back to [www.petrotrin.com](http://www.petrotrin.com) and it is zilch, zero, nothing. Why has the Government taken the decision, if Petrotrin is a legacy company, to shut down the website? So if you want to get information on the financial audited accounts of Petrotrin, there is no information available. Madam President, in fact, the only information available to citizens is to come to the Parliament, on the Parliament's website and whatever documentation Petrotrin brought, it is on our website. But if you want to go to Petrotrin's website to get information, the Government has removed and shut down the website, so there is nothing that you can access under Petrotrin. Madam President, why, why would the Government want to shut down that website?

Madam President, I do not know. They must explain. They must explain who is responsible for shutting down that domain. The domain has been shut down by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago through its board of directors at Petrotrin. Madam President, there are some elements from BP, whose names I will call—I take full ownership of calling their names today—who, Madam President, are in league with the Government in an effort to undermine the rights and the interests of the people in order to gain, what I can only believe is to promote their own self-interest.

Madam President, there is a character who floats around Petrotrin, former Petrotrin, and all the new companies that they have formed. He does not want to be a director, he stays away from directorship, he is in the background but he is making all the moves. I understand he is an advisor, he was the advisor, Madam President, to the Petrotrin board. He was the one who recommended the engagement of McKinsey ahead of contender Solomon Associates, even though they came in after. But he was the one who recommended McKinsey, on the basis, Madam President, that he had worked for McKinsey back in the days of bpTT when he was president.

Madam President, they brought in something called McKinsey here who they gave the go-ahead. They engaged this company and they told that company that they brought in here that the report that they produced at the end of the day must be adopted by Petrotrin as Petrotrin's own report. There is a Corporate Secretary there who they used to identify members, largely at the lower level, who could supply the raw material to McKinsey. These members were directed to sign confidentiality agreements and they were instructed to refrain from disclosing their participation in the board-run process to anyone, even to their supervisors.

Madam President, there was no validation of the data being supplied nor the output by any senior Petrotrin employee. At that time, they had removed the executive management from Petrotrin, so there was no vice-president for the refinery or exploration or production or even a president. One chap called Robert Riley told certain exploration and production personnel, I understand, that they should not be perturbed because they were very concerned about the young age of these graduates that were coming from McKinsey to do this very important exercise on the future of Petrotrin, Madam President.

These consultants were university graduates, who they change ever so often after each assignment had ended, Madam President. As they ended one assignment, they flew out and they brought in a new batch. Madam President, there is one chap whose name I would not call because he is on the board. But he has what is called in Trinidad and Tobago—a politician made famous—he had the testicular fortitude to stand up, and he raised certain concerns about certain assumptions that were being made. You see, these people they brought in from McKinsey, they were brought in to do a job and it was a hatchet job to get rid and to destroy Petrotrin. That was their job, Madam President. And one very patriotic, not the fake patriots that we have elsewhere, real patriots—he stood up and questioned the assumptions being used by McKinsey, Madam President. The new plantation owner of Trinidad and Tobago, the new Calder Hart, who lives in both Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago.

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark, please. I have repeatedly cautioned Members, it is your right, you have the absolute right. But when you are speaking about Members who are outside of this House, I would ask you to, please, exercise a little restraint. I am not preventing you from saying what you have to say but there is no need for you to be talking about where a person lives and ownership, okay?

**Sen. W. Mark:** I am talking about a new slave owner.

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark, please, please.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Okay, a planter owner, a new planter class. Is that okay, Ma'am?

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark. No, please take your seat. I am asking just for restraint. You are speaking about persons who are not Members of this House and cannot defend themselves. I am just asking, I am not preventing you from saying what you have to say, but please exercise some restraint when you are speaking

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about these persons.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Madam President, I want to tell the hon. President of the Senate, I speak—

**Madam President:** No, Sen. Mark, please, please—

**Sen. W. Mark:** All right. I am exercising restraint.

**Madam President:** No, Sen. Mark, I am not finished. I am asking you. I am not preventing you from raising your points. I am not preventing you from calling the names, you want to call. I am asking you though to stop with the hyperbole, some of what you are raising here; that is what I am saying, exercise some restraint, please!

**Sen. W. Mark:** I would hope, Madam President, that what I am about to say would have encouraged those people who have brutalized 6,000 workers and another 10,000 workers indirectly and almost brought to a halt the livelihoods of 100,000 citizens in south Trinidad. Madam President, sometimes you have to agree with me that sometimes you have to stand up and stand up very suddenly in defence of those people. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, this individual who, I agree with you, I will deal with him politically on the platform.

**Sen. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes, you could say it outside.

**Sen. W. Mark:** “Doh” tell me where to say it. I have freedom of speech here, you know.

**Madam President:** You see, what happens, Sen. Mark, when Members do not want to take a little guidance from the Chair, it can lead to disorder in this Chamber and I will not allow that. Minister, please allow Sen. Mark to make his contribution. Sen. Mark, please, please take the guidance that I am giving you.

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**Sen. W. Mark:** Yes, thank you. So, Madam President, this is the gentleman who told you and me and the entire country, fire all, fire all, fire all. Madam President, that is what he told the country. And this is the gentleman, Madam President, that was also party to this McKinsey report. So, the Government has to come clean and tell this country, because I want to tell the Government, you know, you are not going to be there after 2020 or before. If they call a snap election, you lose. [*Desk thumping*] The Government is planning to call a snap election, we understand, we are preparing for them. You call it in 2020 we are prepared for you, anyhow you come is licks like peas, Madam President, snap election or no snap election! So, I want to tell, Madam President, through you to the Leader of Government Business here. I want to tell—[*Crosstalk*]

**Madam President:** Members, please. I want to hear what Sen. Mark has to say. So, please can we listen? Sen. Mark, continue.

**Sen. W. Mark:** So, Madam President, they can tell the country whatever they want. They can choreograph whatever narrative they want to choreograph for the country. The people are feeling it, they are feeling it in their bones, what action the Government and what decision they have taken against the citizenry of this country. And, Madam President, all I was about to tell you is that some of these personnel that they have put in charge of this enterprise, they are insensitive to the needs of the people of this country.

And, Madam President, I have fought many battles and I intend to live, with the help of God, to fight many more, but one of the battles I intend to fight with every sinew of energy in my body is to get rid of this evil, wicked Government called the PNM. [*Desk thumping*] They do not care for the people. Madam President, you could tell me they spent US \$15million on a report, they have that

report, they came to this Parliament and told you and me they do not have a report and there is a report.

So, Madam President, I want to tell you the fire sale has started. The fire sale has started. Madam President, for years, I want to tell you, for some strange reason when different vesting orders were established, the Government deliberately or otherwise may have left it out accidentally. A number of assets that ought to be in the hands of Petrotrin, they left it in the hands of Trintotec and Trintoc, but on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November, 2018, Madam President, Legal Notice page 579 signed by the Minister of Finance, they transferred all the assets that were in the hands of Trintoc and Trintotec, you know where, Madam President? In a company that is a shell company for all intents and purposes, something called Petrotrin, something called Petrotrin. It is not Petrotrin that we know, it is something called Petrotrin.

Madam President, they have transferred 300 bungalows to Petrotrin. You know why? This is a conduit. So when the creditors call on Petrotrin to pay their bills, Petrotrin have no money. So you know what Petrotrin will do—sell off 300 bungalows in Pointe-a-Pierre—

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark, I just have to remind you about the Standing Orders, you are brandishing—

**Sen. W. Mark:** Sorry, sorry, Madam.

**Madam President:** And can I ask you please to face me? Thank you.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Well, you know I always advise you as a former Speaker, you have to rise from that Chair, otherwise you could get trouble with your circulation. *[Laughter]* And I myself, I will have to turn left and right to make sure that I “doh collapse” whilst I am on my legs. You must forgive me, but I will always look at

you, Madam President.

Madam President, imagine 300 bungalows they are about dispose through Petrotrin; that is what they are about to do, 300 bungalows. You know where these bungalows are going to end up, Madam President? It will end up in the hands of the friends and families of the PNM; that is where it will end up. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam President, I will circulate that to you, I do not want to read out every bungalow and where it is located. It is so many, but they have found it convenient now to vest it into Petrotrin. Let me tell you what they are vesting too; they are vesting Petrotrin Staff Club—that is up for sale, the golf courses up for sale, rifle range, swimming pool, tennis court, Petrotrin Sports Club, Guaracara Park, Human Resource, Beaumont Hill Centre, Trade School, Trainee Lecture Hall, Employee Relations Offices, Augustus Long Hospital and Grounds, Wellness Centre, even St. Peter's Anglican Church, they vest. I do not know if that is for sale too. Madam President, the yacht club gone, Bon Accord house, Mount Plaisance gone.

Madam President, what was interesting is that I saw in the newspaper sometime last year, 21<sup>st</sup> of November, so even before they vested this, which is the 28<sup>th</sup> of November, they had already given Massy, the same Massy, and I will talk about that when I deal with procurement at TSTT with an Oracle deal.

**Madam President:** Senator.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Yes, Madam. Madam President, you know what they did? They gave Massy, they bought some, what I call “second-hand communications equipment” from Massy. You know for how much, Ma'am?—TT \$250 million; when there was a protest they brought it down to 225, 225million. And you know what they have done, Madam President? Petrotrin has in Tobago a property which is in disorder; it is called Tobago Vacation Home at Mount Irvin, Tobago. Madam

President, this was advertised, I will give you a copy because I know I cannot display it. But, Madam President, nice swimming pool, luxurious arrangements and since the 21<sup>st</sup> of November, Massy Realty advertising this in T&T.

So, the Government has taken a decision already, Madam President, without any procurement legislation in place to dispose of the assets—I will pass on to you—in this legal notice, to who?—anybody they want to give to. Anybody they want to give to, Madam President, and they are telling this country that they care. Madam President, I want to also let you know—you know we have begun to import fuel. You know that, Madam President? You know where the fuel is coming from? We are told, given that answer, by the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries on the 18<sup>th</sup> of this month in the other place. We are importing fuel.

**3.10 p.m.**

Madam President, you know who is supplying the fuel? The same advisor company who brought in an entourage to take control and to dispose of Petrotrin and to create this new so-called Heritage and Paria and Guaracara, the famous Robert Riley. You know, I wonder if it is coincident, Madam President, that we are being told, in answer to a question by David Lee on the 18<sup>th</sup> of this month, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries tells us that the supplier of refined products for commercial use is BP International Sales and Trading. Madam President, is it accidental that the advisor to Petrotrin, in the transition to mash it up and destroy it, where they brought in a fella called Neil Campbell, they brought in somebody called—some Ali lady. They brought in a lady called, Ali, a “Lisa Ali”, or something like that, and another one, Madam President, and they are the ones, Madam President, who were able to manage with Mr. Espinet, the crash of this

company called Petrotrin. Madam President, and what has happened, in return they have negotiated. The Government has negotiated with them to get our products from where, Madam President?—BP International Sales and Trading.

So the Government crashes Petrotrin, destroys the refinery, closes down the refinery, sends home 5,000 workers, Madam President, but you know what they do instead after they did that? They gave a contract to BP International Sales and Trading to bring in all the products for diesel, for super gasoline, for premium, for aviation fuel, and, Madam President, we do not know how this was done because the Procurement Regulator and the procurement law is still to be proclaimed. So it is Government doing their own thing. I want to tell you, Madam President—Madam President, I want to tell you something, I have an article that I saw in Reuters and one in the *Wall Street Journal*; one dated December the 14<sup>th</sup>—because, before I go there, I must tell you, it is not only importations in trouble you know, we need a criminal forensic investigation into the entire operations of this set of new companies and how this Government is going about importing. [*Desk thumping*] Madam President, you know who are our exporters of crude in this country? The Minister told us on the 18<sup>th</sup> in the other place, I have the answer here, Trafigura, an international trading company, a big one. The other one, Madam President, is ExxonMobil, the third one is Shell and the fourth one is Petrojam. Those are the four companies that are exporting our oil, to where?—we do not know. All we know is that the Minister is boasting, WTI plus 3.

**Hon. Senator:** Two.

**Sen. W. Mark:** That is what we are getting—or 2. That is what we are getting. But, Madam President, the company, the biggest one that is exporting is Trafigura.

I have an article here that says, in Reuters, as you call it, December 14,

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2018, by Brad Brooks:

“Brazilian prosecutors charge ex-Trafigura oil executives with graft...”—  
and corruption.

I wonder if the Minister is aware of this. Madam President, this is dated the 14<sup>th</sup> of December, 2018, and they are all part of a network in something called, “Operation Car Wash” in Brazil that has the former president of Brazil, as we speak, Lula, in jail. And this Trafigura is the leading company exporting our oil along with what the Minister said, ExxonMobil, Shell and Petrojam. Madam President, these executives are now facing criminal charges in Brazil for bribing employees, using them as middlemen in order to transfer the money to politicians for election purposes. That is what they are charged for in Brazil.

The other one is in the *Wall Street Journal*, and this one is dated December 14, 2018, by Jeffery Lewis. It reads:

“Brazil Prosecutors Charge Former Trafigura, Petrobras Executives With Corruption.”

I want to tell the hon. Minister, be careful with who you bring here to export our crude. Madam President, Petrojam is a Jamaican company, we all know; we all know that, a company out of Jamaica, but I want to tell you something, Petrojam is jointly owned by the Jamaican Government and PDVSA of Venezuela. We understand, Madam President, that BP International has a 20 per cent shareholding in a Russian company called Rosneft, R-O-S-N-E-F-T, and that is the majority creditor to a company called Citgo, C-I-T-G-O, which is 100 per cent owned by the Venezuelan State. Madam President, recently I read in the papers where the Jamaican Government is saying they are going to buy out the 50 per cent owned by PDVSA. I do not know, and the Minister must tell us whether the refined products

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that we are importing through BP that has a big interest in Rosneft that is linked to Citgo—

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark, you have five more minutes.

**Sen. W. Mark:**—whether, Madam President, this Government is importing from the US Gulf Coast through Petrojam, the very products that we are exporting as heavy crude into Trinidad and Tobago, because this particular company, Citgo, have their refineries located in Texas and Louisiana on the Gulf Coast of the United States. We just hope that the Minister and this Government is not exporting our oil to Petrojam and to other PDVSA's refineries to have the very refined products reimported into Trinidad and Tobago. This is not economically viable at all.

So, Madam President, I want the Minister to know that what is happening in this country under their watch is not in the best interest of Trinidad and Tobago. Madam President, when Caroni was closed by this Government, casual workers, temporary workers, regular workers, seasonal workers, everybody was treated equally. They got two acres of land. They got one lot of land for residence. You know, Madam President, hundreds, thousands of temporary workers, casual workers working for Petrotrin have gone home with nothing, nothing. Madam President, I recall from a discussion I had with someone, that there was a gentleman who worked for seven months at Caroni in the refinery section, he got his full pay, he got two acres of land and he got a lot for residential purposes after seven months. Madam President, there are people who have worked in Petrotrin for 10, and 15, and 20 years, as temporary workers, casual workers; they gave them nothing. Only temporary people they gave something, but those who are not temporary they get nothing.

Madam President, there are so many issues that we have to discuss, but, as you have said, time would not permit me to go into details on this particular matter. All I want to ask in closing, I want to ask the Minister the following question. We would like to know, Madam President, who are the owners of Professional Resourcing Services? We would like to know who are the owners of Professional Resourcing Services. We would like to know if Mr. Robert Riley is involved in this particular company. Madam President, this is the company that is carrying out an arrangement where they are engaging workers and they are recruiting on behalf of Heritage, Paria, Guaracara and the holdings company, the Professional Resourcing company. So we would like to know, Madam President, who are the owners of this company because it appears that they have a contract to be the sole source contract where they provide personnel to this company or to these companies that they call—well, I have just outlined them. Madam President, in closing, I just want to bring to your attention an article in today's papers where it says, you have to pay credit before you get fuel. Madam President, we have gone from a situation where we had energy security to a situation where we are hostages to international oil companies who are allowed to refine products through BP and bring into our country. So they are saying, Madam President, if you do not pay us cash in advance—and, Madam President, NP is going to be trouble. They are saying that if NP does not pay their bill, and listening to the Minister of Finance, if he does not pay his bills, they are going to take action. So you have a situation that is developing that is extremely serious.

Madam President, in closing, regular gasoline, bitumen and the lease operators, in particular, they have not been paid since November, and I understand they are threatening to close down and hundreds of workers may be on the

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headline. Thank you very much, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam President:** Sen. Teemal. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. Deeroop Teemal:** Thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to make this contribution on the private Motion that is under debate in this House, a private Motion brought by Sen. Ramdeen. Madam President, there is no doubt that we are indeed in difficult economic times in this country, and again there is no doubt that difficult times call for difficult decisions to be made. Somebody has to make them, and I think the burden of the responsibility falls on the Government of the day, and in this particular matter the Government has indeed taken a bold step in making what must have been a very difficult decision. But coupled with difficult decisions is how we manage the implementation of those decisions, and how we manage them particularly in terms of how we mitigate against the impact on the population of Trinidad and Tobago, a population which is already under tremendous distress from austere economic measures that have been put in place over the years. And often it is not only a question of what is our financial responsibility, what is our legal responsibility, but a question of what is our social and human responsibility [*Desk thumping*] in terms of the decisions that we have to make and its subsequent implementation.

Madam President, significant retrenchment kicked off really with ArcelorMittal in the first quarter of 2016, coming into fruition about mid-2016, and it is interesting to note the initial reaction and the initial actions and thoughts expressed at that time in point by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. I think overall there would have been outrage, utmost concerns, particularly in the context, not only of how it was done and the legality of it, but the impact it had on the workers of ArcelorMittal. Unfortunately, a couple of years down the line, not too

far apart, coupled with ongoing retrenchments since that time to now, due to this difficult decision of the Government regarding Petrotrin, not only has the Government who is the major employer of persons in Trinidad and Tobago, they have now become the major avenue of retrenchment of workers in Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] because of the difficult decisions that they have had to make.

So it is instructional, not only to the public, it is instructional to the private sector in terms of how we treat with our workers, how the State treats with its workers for, of course, the private sector, as we have seen in the case of ArcelorMittal and how they approached retrenchment. The private sector is of course going to be influenced, but look at what they could possibly think about in “getting away with” if they follow the lead of the State, which is why the State is in such an unenviable position because being both employer and having to make tough decisions where they have to retrench workers, they have to be like a role model employer when it comes to dealing with the workers of this country.

Whatever investigations went into making the decision about retrenching workers, Madam President, it took place rather quickly. I think Sen. Thompson-Ahye mentioned about the haste and how sudden this came about to the thousands of workers in Petrotrin, and we are seeing and have seen what, I would say, a significant paradigm shift, a paradigm shift in treating with workers of the country. I would just like to quote from an address by the hon. Minister Labour and Small Enterprise Development, Sen. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus, at a weekly luncheon meeting of the Rotary Club of Port of Spain West on Wednesday 20, 2016. This quote is just in keeping with the point I am developing of what that shift—and because of the shift, the onus on the Government of Trinidad and

Tobago, to demonstrate at all times, goodwill regarding the workers of Trinidad and Tobago. And I quote the Minister:

“The question being put forward today is: Retrenchment or no retrenchment. As a Minister of Labour I will say no retrenchment. As part of the business community you should say no retrenchment. I say this because we are all in the same boat together. When the storm comes, we ought not throw our precious resources overboard – our people. These are the same people that have built our businesses, our schools, our nation. These are in many cases loyal employees who have given many years of service. Understand this: when the storm is over, we will be searching for those very same employees who possess immeasurable skills and knowledge to help repair and sail.”

Also, from this same address:

“I just want to underscore the point that retrenchment in large numbers is bad for the economy, bad for business, bad for society and bad for the individuals and affected families. To the economy, unemployment coupled with decreased revenue stagnates. When retrenchment happens in large numbers, it is difficult for an economy already dealing with decreased revenue to absorb large numbers of unemployed persons. As well these unemployed persons are usually very experienced and highly skilled so getting another job that is close to the standard of living that they are accustomed to is a difficult prospect.”

So we are seeing a significant shift out of economic necessity. So how we treat with, or appear to treat with the workers of Trinidad and Tobago, Madam President, it bears on the economic future and prosperity of our nation. At that time we were talking about thousands, and now I guess I would just be throwing

out figures, but can we safely say maybe over 10,000, probably up to 15,000 people have been retrenched over the couple of years. So not only are we in an economic crisis, we are in a retrenchment crisis, and although the intent of the Government has changed from several years to now, as I said, out of necessity, I think, in regarding the closure of Petrotrin, this House, although we have had very, very good contributions from Government Senators on the reasons why Petrotrin was closed, in terms of reports and in terms of detailed analysis as to why, we have not seen those presented in this House. Madam President, there is no doubt that in terms of job loss due to redundancy, it is not just a question of financial implications and financial repercussions, all research that has been done worldwide in terms of the effects and the impact of retrenchment on workers, confirms significant psychological effects on the retrenched worker, the affected worker. What is even more telling is that the effects would be more devastating during an economic downturn, during which unemployment would be high and the retrenched worker would face difficulty in finding another job of similar status. More often than not, the labour market would be flooded with other jobseekers with similar skills and experiences.

Additionally, the effect of job loss would be more felt when the worker has been in service for a long time, as in the case of Petrotrin, and, further, when it involves only specific skills, as in the case of Petrotrin, which may be of little use to potential employers, which again is the case of Petrotrin. Workers who managed to secure new employment would be unable to use their skills in their new job, most likely because they would be underemployed and are likely to experience psychological adjustments while employed. And, of course, coping with all of these problems can create, not only physical but mental stress,

emotional stress, which may contribute to social and psychological disorders. Madam President, allow me to just quote the preamble, preamble (b) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and I read:

“respect the principles of social justice and therefore believe that the operation of the economic system should result in the material resources of the community being so distributed as to subserve the common good, that there should be adequate means of livelihood for all, that labour should not be exploited or forced by economic necessity to operate in inhumane conditions but that there should be opportunity for advancement on the basis of recognition of merit, ability and integrity;”

Madam President, the framers of our Constitution mentioned about economic necessity, and out of economic necessity labour should not be exploited to operate in inhumane conditions. So by mentioning the human condition, not only is it a question of physical well-being, but we are speaking about the emotional, mental and spiritual well-being of workers of this country, which is why we just cannot only rely—due to this human condition framed in our Constitution, a Government, I believe, is expected to go beyond the call with regard to that mental, emotional aspect of humanity. Good industrial practice would call for adequate notice which must be given to affected employees before retrenchment to prepare them and to look for suitable alternative employment. This is a worldwide aspect, and, of course, good practice must contain information such as the reasons for retrenchment, the number of employees likely to be affected, et cetera, when retrenchment is likely to take place. I would like to ask the question, in the haste, whether justified or not, how much of this approach was taken in terms of the retrenchment process? Prior notice is good industrial practice

to minimize the traumatic impact of retrenchment on the workers and their families. Consultation with employees likely to be affected by retrenchment must be carried out. In other words, Madam President, retrenchment is not an event to be implemented, it is not an action to be implemented, but rather it is a process to be managed.

**3.40 p.m.**

Madam President, in this regard, and I come back again to the intent of Government, in 2016 with the ArcelorMittal situation and what was done, the Minister did mention in that address I referred to earlier, assistance including the establishment of a National Retrenchment Register; provision of new job opportunities; provision of seed capital and start-up business financing and support in forming cooperatives; formation of small businesses and cooperatives; focus on training and development, and at that time hosting of an empowerment jobs expo for retrenched workers in April 2016, titled, "Turning Adversity into Opportunity". The job expo offered unemployed persons an opportunity to register with the National Employment Service, interact with potential employers for various sectors and access information and assistance in areas of financial literacy, health and wellness, counselling, training, retraining, certification and entrepreneurial development.

Madam President, I would ask, along these lines, what has been done for the Petrotrin workers?

**Sen. Baptiste-Primus:** That is in place, they can access the 10-point plan.

**Sen. D. Teemal:** Madam President, I come to the Petrotrin Employee Assistance Programme Services Limited that was a fully owned subsidiary of Petrotrin. I would like to ask, with the approach to, in terms of mitigating the impacts and the

psychological impacts of retrenchment, what role did the Petrotrin Employee Assistance Programme Services Limited, a fully-owned subsidiary of Petrotrin—what role were they given? I am under the impression that that subsidiary of Petrotrin was closed as well together with the closure of Petrotrin and, as such, the primary subsidiary within Petrotrin or owned by Petrotrin that could have brought about coordinated, systematic assistance, particularly in terms of retrenchment, with the closure of that subsidiary, how was such programme implemented?

The hon. Minister, Allyson West, mentioned, certain statistics were given about who was helped and all of these things. But through what facility in Petrotrin were these programmes implemented? I question really, if there was a specific subsidiary of Petrotrin, in terms of really dealing with retrenchment and the retrenched Petrotrin workers, why was the Petrotrin Employee Assistance Programme Services Limited not kept alive, to ensure the welfare of the retrenched workers of Petrotrin? [*Desk thumping*]

As I close I must say, I must ask about the Petrotrin Employees' Pension Plan and ask the question: Are the employees whose pensions are guaranteed under that plan, are those pensions safe and are they guaranteed? Because during the course, prior to the closure of Petrotrin or soon after, the trustees of that fund, Republic Bank Limited, did raise some concerns about the longevity and the sustainability of that fund, subject to the amount of persons that would be accessing that plan, due to the retrenchment process in Petrotrin. So I am asking, is that pension plan, is it a guarantee that all the workers who were part of that plan would be able to avail themselves of the benefits of that pension plan?

In closing, Madam President, the reason why I have raised these things is not only in the context of Petrotrin. I am not saying that retrenchment is a process

rather than an event, and placing the Government at the helm to set the example and be the role model for the entire country as an employer, in terms of retrenchment and measures that affect workers. It is that Sen. Vieira in his contribution to this Motion spoke about the impact of technology on work. Retrenchment is not only going to come about due to difficult economic situations. But it is a fact that retrenchment is going to increase due to the impact of technology and particularly artificial intelligence, and AI.

Recently I was speaking to a worker who works in one of the major food companies in Trinidad, and he was informing me that there is a robot that was introduced into the warehousing operations. He says when that robot—it is a pilot project—is fully trained, they are expecting, they have been told, that there is going to be a loss of 26 employees being replaced by that one robot. So changes being brought about by AI are going to contribute to the retrenchment crisis that we are in. So it is important that we get it right.

I must say that the hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development has on several times informed this House of the progress that is being made with regard to amendments to the Industrial Relations Act, the Workmen's Compensation Act and the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act. But, Madam President, deliberations on these, according to a press release done last July 31, 2018, at a media conference, it was hinted that work on those amendments were going on for the past 11 months. So if we are adding to present time, we are talking about 16 months. I know that the Government is in a difficult position, because they have to run concurrently with the revision to these Acts, actions have to be taken that are leading to retrenchment. So it is a tough exercise, but 16 months, yes, sounds like a long time, it is. Maybe because of the tripartite

aspects of these revisions, it is tough to get consensus, but really and truly, we need to see.

The hon. Minister says that her staff is working very hard, and we commend them on that. They are working into the late hours of the night, and a lot of effort is being put in, but I am sure that with these revisions coming into being, a sense of assurance is going to enter our country in terms of the working population of this country.

I thank you.

**The Minister of Trade and Industry (Sen. The Hon. Paula Gopee-Scoon):**

Thank you very much, Madam President, and what a difficult debate this is, from the standpoint of the nature of the discussions that have been going on. But I want to tell you that none of us are far removed from it, and I think I may have spoken about this sometime at the end of last year. I said that I too had a connection, in that, my father when we were very young he worked in the cable department in Shell. Once he was able to see my mother through her year in Mona—she was a pupil teacher, and had the opportunity to go to Mona to do her certificate in education—and once my father was able to see her through that, at that time the VSEP offering was going on in Shell, and my dad took it, but I never remembered sad days.

I am by no means saying that this is a situation which will exist with all of the persons who were affected, but my father took that and turned it into a positive. I do recall from then on, there was never a sadness about it. It was always excitement, and he got into business and the rest is history, and what a good history it was. Again, it is not as easy for all of those persons who were affected, not as easy at all. But I say that to say that there is hope.

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Later on in my discussions, I will speak to some of the points that Sen. Teemal raised, and Sen. Anthony Vieira raised about the changing tide with regard to artificial intelligence—Sen. Viera, sorry. At the fourth industrial revolution, which is not just new—the fourth industrial revolution is continuing from the third industrial revolution which—*[Interruption]* excuse me, yes, and this has been going on for a long time, many years. As a matter of fact, when that Government was in power we were in fact in the midst of the third industrial revolution. So when your political leader wrote about that in the newspaper recently, the AI is not new. AI is not new, it is an extension of the third industrial revolution.

**Hon. Senator:** You missed it, the policy plans.

**Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon:** Policy plans? I will talk to you about that as we go along. But, Madam President, this is not a giggling matter as the Members on the Front Bench opposite to me would have it seem to be. It is not anything to be giggling about. This is a serious matter.

Let me start this debate where Sen. Mark started, by waving his finger when he started his contribution. I want to tell him, he was waving his index finger saying that the population will speak to this at the time of elections. I want to tell him that this is precisely what this is not about. This is not about politics. *[Desk thumping]* This is a very, very, very serious matter, and to introduce this kind of matter, as you have an opportunity to speak to it—

**Madam President:** Senators Hosein and Obika, if you do not want to hear what the Minister has to say you have the option of leaving. You can leave voluntarily, but if you continue it will not be voluntary. Continue Minister.

**Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon:** It is the very reason, politics, why those people when they were government, the UNC Government could not take the kind of

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decision that we eventually took. All of that time things were bad. Things were not good in Petrotrin. All through 2010 to 2015 that Government never had the backbone to take the decision that should have been taken. In fact, they were part of the continuing spend that was taking place in Petrotrin in those days, and I will speak about that. So completely oblivious about the negative financial circumstances of Petrotrin, and at a time when there were great revenues streams and the cushion would have been better and they could have taken that decision, they never chose to.

So today he comes here, completely ignoring the economic circumstances of the country and how the country was being affected by Petrotrin, and waved his finger and turned it all into politics. It is the same thing, you know. From 2014 this country was having falling revenue streams. Things were not good, and they continued to spend and not act in the best interest of this country. And that is where we are.

Again, when he talks about car washing and washing and so on, and waving his finger, they will never return to the corridors of power in this country. Absolutely never return to the corridors of power. *[Interruption]*

**Sen. Obika:** I rise on a point of order. Standing Order 46(1), there is no relevance to the debate at hand.

**Madam President:** Continue Minister.

**Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon:** Thank you, Madam President.

**Sen. Ameen:** Call the election!

**Madam President:** Sen. Ameen.

**Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon:** He went on to talk—I mean, the discussion we were talking about the new buyers of crude oil, and we were talking about the fact

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that those buyers were Trafigura, ExxonMobil, Shell and I think Petrojam. He forgets. We are talking about the large multinational companies, and you come here calling names. Talking about a deal with BP. What deal? We are not in any deals with BP. BP has been pounding and placing substantial investments in this country for a number of years, and they have given commitments, Sen. Khan, that they will continue to invest into this country for the next 10 years, such is the confidence that they have in this PNM-led Government. So what deal? What deal is he talking about?

What does he know about Trafigura? Yes, some executives may have been questioned, or there might be an investigation. They may no longer be in office, but you are dealing that has been in operation for 25 years. I just googled them, they are a multinational commodity trading company. They are trading in base metals and energy. They are legally registered in Singapore. They are one of the world's largest leading independent commodity trading/logistics. And you are coming here to call names and to accuse us of having some ulterior motive by conducting business with Trafigura?

Everything that this new company has done, Heritage and Paria, has been open and transparent and done through the proper tendering processes. [*Desk thumping*] That is a fact. So that, yes, let me confirm that we did have the first importation of fuel for commercial use, and that started in October, and the name of the initial supplier was BP International Sales and Trading. BP is one of the most well regarded international companies. We are fortunate to have BP conducting business with us. So disappointing in Sen. Mark in trying to bring BP into disrepute here in this Cabinet.

Yes, five cargoes have been sold, crude oil, and Minister Khan was on

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record of speaking of the prices that we got, WTI plus US \$2 per barrel.

**Sen. Obika:** Point of order, 46(6). Sen. Mark did not try to bring BP into disrepute. He was pointing to an individual.

**Madam President:** May I just point out, Sen. Obika, that when a Standing Order is to be invoked, it must be invoked with relevance and with a proper regard for the Standing Order. Continue Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon:** Thank you, Madam President.

So that Paria has started business; the thing is going. Paria has started business. Heritage has started business, and I will speak a little later, if I get the chance after I make the more relevant points that I want to speak to, there is a bright future for this company, and we must all participate in it.

He goes on to talk about the Vesting Orders and assets left out, and I am surprised. He does not talk again about the economics and the financial situation of the company, and the big debt hole, no conversation about that. But he comes here to talk about the yacht club, and the bungalow, who getting “de bungalow”, and that is the nature of the conversation here from Sen. Mark, the golf course, and the Guaracara Park. We understand that is part of the character of Petrotrin, it is part of the old Petrotrin, it is part of the character of San Fernando. We understand the fallout of all of these things, but it is miniscule in terms of what we face, and yet Sen. Mark chose to ignore that, but as a responsible Government we could not, we absolutely could not.

Sen. Teemal, you are so right, it was such a very difficult situation to deal with, and it took a Prime Minister like ours to deal with it. And from the time he came into office I remember in 2017, early 2017—we came into office in late 2016, early 2017, he started coming to the—[*Interruption*] We came into 2015—if

you let me finish my sentence—late 2016, early 2017, he started talking to the nation about Petrotrin, and he went to Spotlight on Energy, and so on. The population has been involved from the earliest opportunity, and I will speak to the sequential order of how things happened as well.

But let me just say again, and speak to Sen. Mark again. Again, he comes up with these stories: that we wanted to destroy the OWTU, and put the membership on the breadline and so on. But again, in the course of the many consultations by the Prime Minister to the public, by the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and the board to the OWTU—OWTU was involved. I would speak later again about that. They were very involved, to the point where at one meeting they actually supported the restructuring of Petrotrin into business units. They understood where this was going, and that was recorded as a result of discussions during one meeting.

He talks about A&V Drilling and wanting to destroy the evidence and that kind of nonsense, but that matter has not been lost. That matter is still going through the arbitration process. There are three arbitrators assigned to this. There is no loss of evidence; the matter is ongoing, it is being dealt with, nothing is hidden or anything like that. Where does Sen. Mark come up with these kinds of things? And again he talked about the shady characters and the bogus people, and building a war chest. I mean, where do you get all these spurious concoctions? How does he concoct these things? War chest, building a war chest for the elections. I mean, very, very, very difficult.

I do not want to repeat, but Sen. West spoke about the US \$850 million bond, \$6 billion that us up for payment in August 2019. We were in a recession, how are we meeting this payment? It is a single payment; it is a bullet payment.

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Then by 2021, another \$700million. How are we going to make that? I mean, even the programmes, some of which we were involved with, the Gas Optimization Programme, and so on. There were significant overruns, which the company could not carry. The GTL project—and yes they could blame us how much they want for it, the point is we ended up in a situation where the project management was very bad in all of these large projects, and the result of it is the overruns were there, and added to the conundrum of the whole financial situation of Petrotrin. The Ultra-Low Sulphur Diesel Plant, again, 98 per cent mechanically completed, but it could not be operationalized because of the structural deficiencies and the faulty foundation. It would have taken another US \$350 million to fix that. Where was that US \$350million coming from, which is a \$2 billion? So the two billion and the 850, the 750, substantial—and our declining revenues.

I sit in Cabinet and I see for working capital banks were asking for a guarantee by the Government. Any guarantee by the Government amounts to contingent liability, and it ups our debt to GDP ratio.

**Sen. Khan:** Working capital to buy crude oil.

**Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon:** And this is for working capital. They were such a conundrum, a financial conundrum that they could not secure debt on their own, so that Government guarantees were required to support, and it was just spiralling downward. We had no choice.

Cabinet took a very early decision and appointed this new board under Wilfred Espinet, and I am not afraid to call his name, because these people are coming forward and giving their service to this country, you do not find that you know. It is difficult to find people with the adequate skills to give up their time. You could ever pay these people for the job that they are doing? Not at all. So

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they have come forward, and we have begun to see in their last quarter financial statements ended June 2018, benefits of the results of restructuring, and keeping your expenditure down, and so on. But, Madam President, that was not enough, and so the decision had to be taken if it is that Petrotrin had to survive. Difficult, difficult, difficult, but one that we just absolutely had to attend to.

Madam President, I will tell you something about this whole financial consideration. You realize that the structure of the Motion was completely devoid of any discussion about economics or finances; very clever of Sen. Ramdeen. “All kinda ting in de Motion”, all the different limbs, not one limb concerning the dire straits of Petrotrin; very clever on your part. And he says he is; it will get you nowhere.

But as I said very difficult decision, but you all brought up the point about consultation. I make the point again, and stress, the hon. Prime Minister did his part in bringing it to the population. Again, the Lashley Report was presented sometime in June 2017, and when the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries got the Lashley Report, immediately—I know that you held a meeting with the OWTU and the President General. That was in July of 2017, and discussions were held on that, on the unsatisfactory performance of Petrotrin. So that discussions were ongoing about the working capital deficit, the losses within the refining and the marketing areas, the money that was owed to the Government. So what was there to gain by Petrotrin anymore, except that it employed people? It came upon the Government to find the solution to fix it, and find ways—and I will speak to it—about how these people can be reemployed and their situations turned around again.

I made the point in the course of the consultation that OWTU did support the

idea of restructuring Petrotrin into business units, recognizing the need for greater accountability and the strengthening of the board and so on. Following all of that, Cabinet would have accepted the Lashley Report and the recommendations of the Committee. Then we took decisions that the restructured Petrotrin must be managed and governed as a competitive business, aimed at becoming a sustainable, profitable entity which the people of Trinidad and Tobago can depend on. Again, that was when the board was brought into place in September.

Then following from that—and I want to remind this honourable House about something. There was a member of the OWTU, we never left them out, on that Lashley committee. Am I right, Senator? There were two members of the OWTU on the Lashley committee, so you talk about consultation, they were involved all along the way. *[Interruption]*

**Sen. Hosein:** “She doh read so she doh know.”

**Madam President:** Sen. Hosein, second warning. Continue Minister.

**Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon:** Then again, in discussing the way forward and the outcome of the work of this new board, I do recall that at some point again the hon. Prime Minister had invited OWTU for discussions along the way, and it was declined.

**4.10 p.m.**

And then even in the construct of the new board, the Prime Minister did invite OWTU to make a nomination, and they also declined. So they were invited to be part of this new process in reconstructing, reinventing Petrotrin; they declined.

And I am saying all of this to tell you the length and breadth which the Government went to, in fact, make known or involve the union, contrary to what

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Sen. Mark said, in the whole process of reinventing Petrotrin.

And then the Lashley Report was laid in this House, laid as a paper in the House and was referred to a Joint Select Committee on Energy Affairs, open; open for all to see. Right? And the committee discussed the report in a number of meetings, and there were public hearings with both Petrotrin and the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries as well, so there was consultation right through the entire process.

But I come now to speak to the point of the job losses, and Sen. Teemal would have spoken about the national register of retrenched workers, and I give you the assurance that there is one in place. And you are right, in 2016, with the fallout with ArcelorMittal, there was a job expo which was organized by the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development and well attended, and many of those persons came subsequently to be employed.

There is continuing assistance by the Petrotrin Employee Assistance Programme as well, and at every way possible there is assistance, but I can tell you that, particularly in my Ministry, sorry, the Ministry which I lead, and in the Ministry of Tourism, in several other Ministries that are responsible for diversification and responsible for developing projects and, again, with the particular focus on San Fernando, there is a lot of work going on to ensure that there is opportunity for the people in particular in the southland.

And there is another question—I want to speak more about that, and then I will come to the point you made about the pension plan. But I think it was Sen. Vieira, again, who spoke about the Fourth Industrial Revolution and, again, you raised the possibility of job losses.

Interestingly, there was an article in the *Sunday Express* on the 20<sup>th</sup> of

January this year and the article is entitled, “IT creates more jobs than we lose”. And it goes on to talk about “the cycle of job loss and job creation”, and the fact that it “is happening ever faster”. And what it was saying is, the article says, that you would be surprised that, you think that IT is going to cause job losses to a large extent.

What this analysis tells us, and it was done by the World Economic Forum is, in fact, there are other jobs that will be created along the way. So what this speaks to is the fact that persons and even those, not only those who have lost their jobs, but I speak to youngsters as well, one has to be careful in terms of what you choose to study, and you also have to be—it does not matter your station in life, you continually have to retool yourself and get ready for the ever-evolving and changing world, an interconnected world that we live in; and that is a fact. And I mean, I do not want to, I am not seemingly speaking in an uncaring fashion, but that is the reality of the world in which we live. So it says here that there are new professions that will define the future.

And I want to quote, Madam President, because it says:

“One of the jobs expected to cease existing will shock many bright T&T students—”

—and that job is the job of a lawyer. It went on to say, the article:

“This is because software and algorithms will be able to more effectively adjudicate on legal matters. Financial analysts...”

—and I see Madam President smiling, but we are close to retirement—  
[*Laughter*]—

“Financial analysts, accountants and auditors are also expected to fall by the...wayside.”

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Listen to me, Sen. Ramdeen, you are not in, you are on the young side so take note. But what should you be retraining for?—that is the question. What should you be training for? And they are saying here, that:

“Managers, human resources specialists, Supply Chain and Logistics specialists...”

—are some of the safe options that are there. And roles that require the negotiating with other people, you are talking about sales and marketing and so on and, of course, there will always be a job for a politician and a Senator. Right?

But I say all of this to say that you cannot escape the environment in which you exist. And you see all of those creative people that are out there as well, there are big, there are huge opportunities there for them in the creative sector and so on.

So that the Minister would have spoken to the projects that we are focusing on for the south and central Trinidad. And apart from focusing on the areas, the focus also has to be on the sectors because there are many of those persons with engineering skills and so on. Yes, they may have to redefine themselves in terms of the particular skills, but they are open to employment within the manufacturing sector certainly, and I am talking about those persons with engineering skills, and certainly in the maritime sector.

And we have spoken to the population about the new projects that will be created, and the kind of job activities that will be there, the opportunities that should be created. And I can tell from the standpoint from the manufacturing sector, you spoke about job losses, and I am going to tell you the areas of opportunity. I can you that certainly in the manufacturing sector with that Phoenix Park Industrial Estate which is being done by this Government, it is at the stage where we have signed a memorandum of understanding, we have actually

completed the feasibility study. We have, the commercial agreement has been completed, it is before the EMA to satisfy that process, the employers' requirements have been done, and so now it is for the EMA to conclude their aspect of it, and then we move to the employers' responsibility and the framework agreement and so on. So that is well on its way.

And during the construction period we expect that 1,000 persons will be employed, and the opportunity with 60 to 80 factories in there and warehouses and distribution centres and so on, we are looking at upwards of 4,000/4,500 persons in that industrial estate, so important it is to the southern region.

And, of course, there are other projects in the south, and Minister would have spoken about the extension of the San Fernando highway to Point Fortin, it the San Fernando waterfront development project, the Skinner Park redevelopment project. In Moruga, where there are also Petrotrin workers, the Moruga fishing port, the Moruga agro-processing and light industrial park, in La Brea the La Brea dry-docking facility.

And let me just tell you with regard to that La Brea dry-docking facility, it is a mammoth, mammoth, mammoth opportunity. And so during the construction of the project some 3,500 jobs will be created, those are direct jobs, and there will be also 5,000 indirect jobs as well, and when on completion and operationalized, some 2,700 direct jobs and 13,000 indirect jobs as well. Again, Madam President, significant opportunity there as well.

Even also, the methanol to DMA complex which I know the last Government was involved with, but they never completed the agreement, and when we came into office, we had to go back and negotiate, that is in the Point Lisas Industrial Estate; that too is a significant opportunity for employment

especially for the engineers and technicians and that kind of thing.

And I spoke about the other opportunities in terms of the creative sector, but I will not go into too much detail on it, Madam President. And I am trusting—I would not speak to it, Madam President, I am not going to speak much about the tourism sector, but I want to say that there is the opportunity in San Fernando even for sports tourism as well, with the Brian Lara stadium and so on. So that there are a number—but the point I am making is that there are a number of projects that are listed for south Trinidad and they, in fact, represent opportunities for all those persons who have not yet found employment.

So concerned we are, we are very concerned and the necessary—it is important as the economy has turned around and we are looking towards growth of just under 2 per cent for 2018/2019, 2 per cent, there would be greater opportunities as we seek to attract further investment into Trinidad and Tobago.

But, Madam President, I want to get back into the crux of the debate to say that the transition has been a good one. Yes. And I have spoken to the question of job losses and so on. The transition has been a good one from the point of view that we have in place the Paria Fuel Trading Company and, of course, the Heritage Petroleum Company Limited as well. I say so because there are key successes to date. A number of management employees have been rehired, also along with new employees, and probably they are at the level of the management structure, and I think almost immediately or in the very near future, all of the other jobs that are available in the new organization structures will be filled.

So as we speak, there is a hiring of employees to fill the org structures, and I can say that I am quite certain that suitable employees will be brought back into the organization. And I say suitable, because one has to be very careful if you are

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rejuvenating or reinventing an organization because something that is very important is that you do not make the same mistakes again. So that the culture of the organization is important, and people who are employed under these new companies must be prepared for hard work, and to know that they are acting in the best interest of the nation.

Energy business is not small business, energy business is big business, big money, and therefore if you are going to do it, if you have a channel, a bite at it, it has to be done well, and the culture that you create in the organization matters. We are looking to have a healthy organization.

Madam President, I want to go to a point that Sen. Teemal made, I think it is so important, he spoke about Republic Bank and the question of the pension plan which was raised. Just to say that this is a—this particular Petrotrin pension plan is a closed plan, so that there are no more contributions being made. So that the performance of the plan will really depend on how its securities perform, and that—so we are concerned about the future for it, but what we have done, we have put in place, we have commissioned an architect, not an architect, an actuarial report. We have commissioned an actuarial report to look into the direction of the pension plan. But as it is, it stands healthy, but it is something that is concerning, that will be of concern to the number of pensioners and those—the number of pensioners and retired persons who have retired from Petrotrin, so that remains—*[Interruption]* No, that remains of significant import to us.

Sen. Thompson-Ahje, you were very, very passionate and you spoke about the quality of life and the importance of these kinds of decisions in terms of the effect that it has on families; and we understand. We understand and do not for a moment think that we were callous in the way we approached this, it is absolutely

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not so.

**Madam President:** Minister, you have five more minutes.

**Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon:** Thank you. We were at pains, but we had to make a decision. Do we continue the way we were going?—and with no end in sight and with no—and not understanding where we are going with this, remembering as well that they were producing fuel and so on which by 2020 when the MARPOL Convention takes effect, nobody in the world was buying the quality of diesel that they were making, and just to get that plan going again would have taken another, more than a \$1 billion. Those were the kinds of things that we had to take into consideration.

We are concerned, but I think the board, not “I think”—the board and the Cabinet acted judiciously, acted with haste, with dispatch I would rather say. All of the responsibilities which we took with regard to the former Petrotrin employees, we have done. We have paid \$2.4 billion out to former employees, there is \$2.4 billion in circulation in the south of Trinidad. Money has been paid, it is somewhere. If it left somewhere, it is got to be somewhere. Right?

**Hon. Senator:** Somewhere.

**Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon:** No. And you would laugh at that, Sen. Haynes, you would laugh. But the fact is, that money is in circulation, it is in banks or it is in circulation, and people are being careful, but \$1.9 billion was paid into their termination packages, all of the outstanding vacation. The back pay was paid, and even the amount owed to the non-permanent workers was paid, so I think in every which way, we have acted responsibly, and we have done what we had to do.

As I say, you know, let me go where I started. When my father took the VSEP it was because it was a decision made by some head office. And this is not

the first time because remember we changed hands many times, eh, Shell, Texaco, you name it. Right? And Amoco was in there some place and so on, but they were big decisions being made in boardrooms abroad, and we were affected here. This time it was a big decision which fell to us as a government dealing with a state company; that is where it boils down.

This time, it was not the big people that took it and run, we had to make the right decision, this Government had to make the right decision. And I think in recognizing all sides to it, the economics, the overall effect on the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, the finances with regard to the continuing losses in Petrotrin, the people of San Fernando, the people of Petrotrin, that was our major concern.

And this is the reason why all of us on this side will continue to do whatever we can to ensure that we take care of the people of the southland, and we ensure that these new companies do, in fact, work and do what they are supposed to do which is, benefit the country, and that is what this is all about. I want to thank all of you, and Madam President, for the opportunity to contribute. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam President:** Hon. Senators, at this stage we will suspend the sitting and we will return at 5.00 p.m.

**4.27 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5.00 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

[MR. VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

**Mr. Vice-President:** Sen. Haynes.

**Sen. Anita Haynes:** [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. Vice-President, for recognizing me as I rise to contribute on this very important Private Members' Motion. I would just like from the very beginning to thank Sen. Ramdeen for moving this important Motion because it allows us an opportunity to prosecute a

defining moment in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. Because no matter how you try to frame the closure of Petrotrin, what happened on August 28, 2018, will be a defining moment in our history, but most importantly, it gives us a chance to refocus this Petrotrin conversation.

And I noted that the Minister of Trade and Industry in her contribution looked at the Motion and said there was no mention of the economics behind it, and the state of the economy, and I think sought to almost chastise Sen. Ramdeen for the framing of the Motion because it left out what they wanted to talk about. But the reason for this Private Members' Motion was because from the very beginning, the United National Congress had been clear on where our focus was in this Petrotrin saga, and that was firmly on the side of the workers. [*Desk thumping*]

And my contribution here today, Mr. Vice-President, I intend to cede the majority of my time to those temporary Petrotrin workers who have been left out of this conversation, or more than left out, drowned out of this conversation, because as we went back and forth in terms of what was done and how much—the 2.4/2.5 billion-dollar pay-out—a lot of people have been left out of this conversation.

And with your permission, Mr. Vice-President, later on in my contribution, I have gotten permission from temporary workers who have been retrenched from Petrotrin, they have sent me messages, emails, WhatsApp conversations and Facebook messages, that I would like to read into the record because it is time for their story to be told as well, and I have an opportunity to do that here today, and I intend to take that opportunity.

But before I get to that, unfortunately I have to deal with some responses to some of the speakers that went before me. I want to clarify, again, what the United

National Congress' position was from the beginning. This is a press release sent out by our political leader on August 28, 2018, which called and urged the Keith Rowley administration to take a cautious and pragmatic approach to this Petrotrin issue; that is what we asked for the beginning, not hysteria, not hold your hand, not anything, but to take a cautious and pragmatic approach to this Petrotrin issue. Because we noted then, this is the same day the board announced the Petrotrin closure, that the restructuring of Petrotrin will have immediate and long-term effects on the national economy, and the Government should not pursue this in their usual ad hoc manner.

They came here today with defences to talk about, because when persons said they "acted in haste", the defence was, "there was no haste"; the Prime Minister spoke about this January 2017. In that address to the nation on January 2017, I seem to recall that while the Petrotrin issue was raised, it was also intimated that there would be no closure of the Petrotrin refinery. [*Desk thumping*] So if you are going to talk about when you addressed it, well give us the total picture.

Again, the Minister of Trade and Industry sought to tell us, and the Minister in the Ministry of Finance sought to tell us, that OWTU was involved in this process, everybody knew everything, everybody knew this was what was going to happen.

But in April of 2018 they signed an MOA—well, the board of Petrotrin—signed an MOA with the OWTU looking for ways to make Petrotrin more sustainable and profitable. How would they have known that closure was going to come in August? Again, very disingenuous. But I go back to what our position was on August 28<sup>th</sup> which is a position we have maintained to this day.

The press release says, what Trinidad and Tobago needs now is “a sensible and cautious approach”. We need:

“...a Government that cares about the major humanitarian impact any restructuring will have on the people of our country.

Change is inevitable, but the Keith Rowley administration has already proven that they are willing to act in a callous and arrogant manner giving little or no thought about how their actions affect the everyday lives of people.”

So when the Minister of Trade and Industry asked about, why our Motion is framed in this way, it is because, as we have said before, as we said on August 28<sup>th</sup> and as we maintain now, our interest in this issue is the humanitarian impact and the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Trade and Industry spoke about consultation, and insisted that there was consultation on this Petrotrin issue. And perhaps took some offence when I laughed because, Mr. Vice-President, I do not know what consultation means to this Government. If it is anything like the Prime Minister's conversation with the media, then I have some kind of idea how they approach consultation; they talk, you listen, their way goes, and that is the end of it. So if that is how they approach consultation, then I understand how we got here today.

But in reference to the Lashley Report and that the report was laid the Parliament, et cetera, then we have no problem with that, you know, but did the report say “shut down the refinery”. Did the Lashley Report say shut down the refinery?—because we have been saying from the beginning, it never said that. So when we asked, how did you get to shutting down the refinery, that is the question you must answer.

Again, on the OWTU, that they understood, that they knew that this was coming. I do not know if the Minister is aware, but members of the OWTU are very much tuned in to this debate and they were not happy to hear you say that at all. They were also not happy to hear you imply that we cannot thank or pay Espinet, et cetera, enough for their service to this country, because a lot of people do not feel that way; a lot of people do not agree with you on that.

And I think, Mr. Vice-President, as we look at this issue on Petrotrin, I remember in the budget debate, the last budget debate of October of last year, I raised on the issue of Petrotrin this question of rehiring. And you heard the Minister in the Ministry of Finance and the Minister of Trade and Industry both, I think, incredibly bring up this concept of the millennials and the millennials being okay with being fired. I am a millennial and I can assure you that that age group, that 23-to-38 age group, you are not going to be okay with having your job snatched away from you; [*Desk thumping*] that is, I mean, a very ridiculous concept.

Moving around in a job is one thing, but losing your job and then being told, “just retool or you will be rehired”; you see that—and then telling us right after that, “but we empathize”. Persons in that age group, that 30-to-38 age group are people with mortgages, people with young children, people who are starting off their lives, and for you to come here and say, “Hey, look at all these other fields”. How many jobs has this PNM administration created?—from 2015 to now, how many jobs have they created, places they have expanded?

**5.10 p.m.**

So again, very disingenuous to come here today and say, “Look, you could find work, you know”. And when I go through the messages sent from the

Petrotrin workers, you will see what I am saying about what the day-to-day reality people are facing now, and on the rehiring, and you heard a lot of praise for Paria and Heritage, and that these are meant to be their saving graces. Right? That this will fix the problem. I have my doubts because no one has given us the details in terms of what change, what fundamental change in the operations of these companies? What will change in the way that they are managed, and how the State will ensure that these successor companies will be efficient and be competitive? You see, they are not telling us that, they are just telling us, “trust us, trust us”, this will work, everybody will be fine.

But, from the information that we have now, the working conditions in Heritage and Paria are not good. People are being employed, Mr. Vice-President, on short-term month-to-month contracts. You know what month-to-month contracts give you? It is the same millennials you are talking to, the same people you are saying, “Hey, you will get jobs, you will be all right, you will be okay”. Month-to-month contracts mean you have no vacation, no sick days, you have no space to negotiate, whatever you are given that is what you have to take. Right? You cannot stay home. You are scared to stay home because you know there are other people right outside, desperate for these same jobs.

That is the situation they have placed the very same millennials that they are saying, “Look, this is a bright, shining, new opportunity for you”. “Just have a lil hope, be a lil innovative, you will be all right, just go”, but they have no overtime, they are working 12-hour shifts, more than that in some cases, some days you have to be told—you get a phone call to be told you are in Port of Spain today, in San Fernando tomorrow. How do I know this? These are my friends, these same millennials that you are giving advice to. These are people I went to school with.

That is how you are living in Trinidad and Tobago now. I mean, I am appalled by the way this Government has approached this situation, and I am also appalled by the manner in which they are trying to cloud this and say, “Hey, this is a rel good thing for Trinidad and Tobago”. It might be a good thing for some of you, but not for the majority of us.

I said in the budget debate, Mr. Vice-President, that while they were busy giving out termination letters, that the two new companies were beginning to advertise vacancies, the same saving graces, Paria and Heritage, and they were all for management positions, and it looked, I said then, suspiciously, like they did not learn a thing. We were going with another top heavy approach to these businesses, and I said that the people who were definitely getting the biggest packages in Petrotrin, the severance packages in Petrotrin, were going to be those who were rehired first, and that is why people were disenchanted in this country that you have to be aware that there must have been a management problem in Petrotrin. But you chose to peg the blame for what happened in Petrotrin on the lowest rung of the workers. The majority of the workers, you say, “These guys are the problem”. “You see this top here, this top layer that made all the decisions that carried us down this path, they are the good guys. Let us give them big severance packages, and then let us rehire them.” That is their idea of good governance.

And if you think that I am making that up, because I was shocked, Mr. Vice-President, when I heard the Prime Minister, during his lecture on national TV, usual talk about this closure of Petrotrin means good things, roads and national security, and everybody is going to be good. “We shut down Petrotrin, everybody else is going to be rel good now.” And he said—oh, sorry, I will quote directly for you:

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So when you are minding your business, and people tell you that they are affected by the closure of Petrotrin, and we know that. We empathize.

—This is the direct quote from the second part of the lecture series, eh.

But we could not make an omelette without breaking the egg, and hopefully we will have a meal for all after we break the egg.

—So, he and all is hoping because they are not sure. All right? But it is—the Prime Minister says:

Important as it is, but by that same token jobs are being created because we cannot do this without creating jobs. And whilst some of us, some people would have been affected and might have had a bad Christmas, I am sure there are a few that did, but the people who got a big fat cheque...

—This is the Prime Minister, eh, of the country—

...and got rehired back here, they got the best of both worlds, but that does not make the news. Thousands of people are coming back, but the people who got the big fat cheque they got rehired back.

And he had no problem saying this.

You know, I agreed with the Prime Minister here. This should make the news. This should make the news, and this should have everybody in Trinidad and Tobago up in arms, because this is the problem. This is what we were saying was the problem from the beginning, and they have no problem saying this on national TV, you know. Again, Mr. Vice-President, the approach by this Government can be nothing short of appalling. So when this Motion speaks to:

“...the decision to close the...refinery will have a direct adverse consequences on thousands of persons as well as on the economy of Trinidad and Tobago;”

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When we speak about the thousands of persons, they have no problem speaking to the few who got these big cheques, that they were okay with rehiring. No explanation given. While I prepared—oh, no, I still had something else. The Minister in the Ministry of Finance, again, talking about the termination packages, and that we had these termination—and they like this \$2.6 billion package. It is a very good number for them, because, you know, it gives us all the impression that everybody is set, \$2.6 billion, it is in banks in south. It is in the banks. It is moving around.

**Sen. Mark:** It is circulating.

**Sen. A. Haynes:** It is circulating. [*Laughter*] Right? The Minister in the Ministry of Finance gave us another number—

**Sen. Ramdeen:** It is circulating and “dey ain’t geh it yet”.

**Sen. A. Haynes:** Yes. Some of them are never getting it. \$520,000 per employee, come on. Come on? Right? All the employees getting the same termination package. Why even introduce that number? Unless you are trying to create a specific impression? Very disingenuous.

And they are listening to you, you know. They are listening to what you have to say here, and they are not impressed by what they are hearing. You see, the idea that you could come here and give us a figure for the termination packages and then tell us that these—it continues their narrative that everybody that was working in Petrotrin, they are at home now and they are rich. They are doing well, do not worry about them. And as a matter of fact, that they got rich on your pocket. Because, when you say things like, “When we close Petrotrin that means better health care, better schools”. Come on, are you saying that the reason we are in the situation we are in here is because those people were employed? So if we

get rid of those guys, you will be all right?

Again, I will remind the Government that people are listening to you. Every time you stand up here to speak they are listening to you. And, you know, there was another thing that they did throughout this entire Petrotrin saga, which was brand workers in Petrotrin as being lazy. That the operations of Petrotrin could not continue. The OWTU, there was a space for inefficiency, and, all right, these are the same people you are saying, "Go out there and find jobs", because the information I have is that people are not trying to hire ex-Petrotrin employees, because the Government said, "dey wasn't good" so nobody wants to hire them. So, the same millennials you are telling, bright, shiny opportunities, remember that you are the ones who said they were no good. They were not any good.

And now I want to take the opportunity, like I said, to go into some of the stories that I was sent by all my channels. Mainly these are WhatsApp messages, they were all sent between last night and this morning. Because in preparation for a debate, I thought on how the Petrotrin refinery will have direct adverse consequences on thousands of people, because they had felt it fit, or fitting actually, to actually hear from some of those people. They gave me their permission and they gave me their full stories. The Government likes to get up and say that we are creating hysteria or we are creating these stories. I have no problem sharing all of these with them. I can—most of them, I think, are your constituents. There are quite a bit of people from Point Fortin and La Brea, and San Fernando West. So, if you wanted to talk to them you can find them, but I guess you do not want to, so I will bring it here. This one is Ken, a worker at Petrotrin. He says:

Most people believe all of Petrotrin workers went home with huge amounts

of money, which is not so. Many of them who got permanent late and have as much as 30 years temporary service is today facing a type of hell, leaving them with banks, credit unions and other institutions where they took loans, because once they had gotten through with a permanent job and finally had job security they took the chance to do the things they never had the opportunity to do.

—And I think that is very understandable. Because, the situation we are in, again, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance was telling us about millennials liking to move. The fact is, all we have available to us is contract employment. Right? You get three years here, you might get three years there. You may not want to move, you know, but you have no choice but to move. But anyway—so they tried to do things that they could not achieve before.

He goes on to say:

Today is a very dark place, with whatever money they have, barely anything from back pay, they have to pay off their mortgages, loans, day-to-day bills, and they have no job. Please note no money was paid for all the years temporary workers—that they were temporary workers.

So if you served 30 years, and you were permanent for three years, you got money for three years, and that is what we call justice in this country. Right? He goes on to say:

My area of work was never losing money. We always made huge profits, E&P, same with Trinmar also, and how can you do this to innocent workers? How can you say that our salary and all of these things—well, he used a word that is unparliamentary here, but he said all of these things were not true—I never worked for \$45,000 per month.

—You see that statement by the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, that hurt a lot of people, eh. There were no carpenters working for \$45,000 a month. There was no apology for them, the people brought their payslips and thing to disprove something that was said by the Government, which is why I have maintained, the treatment of these people by the Government of this country could run a public relations campaign against a group of people in this country, is a very dark day in our society. [*Desk thumping*]

So, he goes on:

I never worked for \$45,000 per month. Temporary workers never worked for \$21,000 per month. None of these things are true. How can you do this to workers who helped to build the country?

We are asking the same thing. I agree with you. How can you run a full-fledged government-funded public relations campaign? Because every time you get up to an address to the nation and what not, the same people you are saying were making all this money were the people paying for it via their taxes, eh.

Why put some of us as retirees, and we got permanent in the late part of our lives, and leave us in a situation where we have to be suffering? This is totally wrong and unholy. Now to know four companies open back up today. So what is this nightmare about? We want justice and we want our jobs back.

Now, Ken has the same impression that a lot of people, especially Sen. Mark has, that he feels like he knows for sure that they did this to get rid of the union, because the innocent workers now have no bargaining power in these companies. He goes:

Most of us are trying our best to do the math on how to pay off our

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mortgages, our loans and our bills with no job anymore, thanks to this Government, who said no one will lose their jobs...

—Because they remember. They think people forget, but they do not. Right?

This is what most of us have to deal with today. It is very difficult and it is painful, and it is hurting us because we did work very hard, and not just for money but for our country. And I will say that as I live through this nightmare, and I have to go through the newspapers and see that I am getting so much money, and knowing none of this is true, this is what hurts me.

—And this is not me saying it, this is Ken. So he is talking about a lot people:

And then when you hear what is taking place today at the so-called new company, it is a shame, no safety, no accommodation for workers, the new CEO, stories about him, we will not want to hear, because as a people, if we heard how people are being treated in these new companies, we should all feel shame. Management is telling workers, this is not Petrotrin, it have no union here. What is that supposed to mean?

Well, you and I could draw our inferences in terms of what does that mean, eh, there is no union here.

**Hon. Senator:** They have no rights.

**Sen. A. Haynes:** No rights. I know people got upset with Sen. Mark and some of his statements, but I feel like the people who are living this experience will very much agree with Sen. Mark in terms of what is going on down there. [*Desk thumping*]

Personally, I have a disability, and I had to write to the former Petrotrin CEO, Mr. Malcolm Jones, who wrote to former Patrick Manning to get my job back after I did my back surgery...

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—This is how much these people want to work.

The same lazy people they were talking about, after he had back surgery, wrote to get his job back, because they need employment. That is what you talk about when you are talking about opportunity and hope and what not. It is just these words that the Minister of Trade and Industry comes in here and—they want jobs—

**Sen. Ameen:** He is a millennial?

**Sen. A. Haynes:** “Nah”, he is not a millennial. He is not a millennial. He said:

I retrained myself, I started all over and I started in a new department...

—And I told both men this is the Manning incarnation, so I feel like he is not on board with the Rowley incarnation of the PNM.

**Sen. Ramdeen:** “Nah, nah, nah.”

**Sen. A. Haynes:** ...that I would not let them down, and I work very hard with a passion, and after 30-plus years, I got permanent in the last five years, and at my age they made me a retiree. I did not ask for anything, because all I wanted to do was work, and this is why I went that far to get my job back. So now, tell me, where can I find a job?

I do not know if when the Government gets up to respond at some point somebody could tell us, tell Ken from Fyzabad, where he will get a job with his skills and his disability.

**Sen. Ramdeen:** Go and build a boat for the Chinese people.

**Sen. A. Haynes:** Correct. What is the hope you are giving them?

So, this closure of Petrotrin is taking away from me—he said—\$2,600 cannot do much of me. I still have bills to pay. I have my bank loan, I am paying in two credit unions. I hope—he is talking to me now—I hope you

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understand why I call it a nightmare, and it is very emotional, because I love my country, and it was a legacy as my grandfather and father worked for the company, and never in my life, never in my life I thought this day would come.

So if you wanted to ignore—now this is, I have to use her initials—

**Mr. Vice-President:** Senator, as much as I understand the context of what you are doing, when you initially indicated that you were going to use these messages to sort of bring your point across, I do not think we took into account exactly how long the messages were. So, I do not expect that you are going to go through every single message that you have had and read out what seems to be whole paragraphs of what people have said. If you can, having read the messages prior, paraphrase at this point, and even so, not to go through every single one, because I think you are making your point. And you want to go on to the next message that is on your list, but paraphrase it. Do not read out the entire thing. If you could just paraphrase it to make the point in the context of your entire debate, then do so, otherwise you are going to end up running into an issue with relevance in that—or repetition, or tedious repetition in that sense.

**Sen. A. Haynes:** Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. I can paraphrase. I made a promise that they would hear their story, because they are paying attention to the debate, and they felt as if, and I think rightfully so, that the Government has a space and the means to control the airwaves, and get their story out.

**Hon. Senator:** What is this?

**Mr. Vice-President:** No, no, no. No, no, no. No, no, no. That particular line you are going down there now, I will not allow. What you can do, understanding what it is you are trying to do, you can indicate the name of the individual, the fact that

they sent the message to you, and you can paraphrase what is being said in the message. The problem is, is that when you are trying to read out these messages, and the length of the messages, you are going to end up in tedious repetition, especially if the messages have similar lines coming along. So it is just guidance to you, that you can call the name of the individual, paraphrase what is being said in the greater context of the point that you are making in the debate.

**Sen. A. Haynes:** Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. I got hundreds of messages and I chose stories that all made different points, because I was aware. So, I do not think I will run into it, but I can paraphrase. Because the next individual who is from Point Fortin, had asked me to use her initials, simply because—and I have to directly quote this here, because I do not want people to think that I am saying this. She says, “Please do not use my name because victimization is rampant and real”. And CB who is a young mother of two children, both her and her husband worked in Petrotrin. What happens now is that they were both unemployed for a while. The husband was able to find another job. But the space that she took issue with, with the Government, is this same point that both the Minister in the Ministry of Finance and the Minister of Trade and Industry tried to raise here today, which is this idea of the \$2.6 billion in circulation. You see, the issue that people are taking now, is that in a space of—in a country where there is rampant crime, there is a national security problem, to insinuate that there are a lot of very wealthy people with hundreds of thousands of dollars sitting around in their households in South Trinidad right now, as she is home alone with her two children because her husband now has to leave very early in the morning and come back very late at night, she is concerned for her safety and her well-being.

[MADAM PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

She also wanted to send a message to this Government, that she felt betrayed, because, like me, she noted that the Government, the Prime Minister, Dr. Rowley, said that they would not shut down Petrotrin, and how did we end up here? And her story, I thought was particularly touching, because she also wondered about what there would be in terms of hope for her young children, she asked, and as Sen. Thomson-Ahje noted, what did the Government factor in what the closure of Petrotrin would do to families in Trinidad and Tobago? And that was the question she raised.

Now I get to an actual millennial, Madam President. And the millennials that both the Minister in the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Trade and Industry had a lot, a lot of advice for, and I think, advice that was not well-placed, because you see, when you are out of touch with the reality that you are trying to speak to, you end up giving advice that really would not make any sense. So, Kalifa who now had reached out to me since last year, because this was when they were going through the back pay issue and the Government had this floating date for when the temporary workers would get their back pay, and eventually they got it on January 15<sup>th</sup>. These are the people who I think the Prime Minister was talking about, who might not have had a very good Christmas. She had gone through the process in terms of how you would be filled as a temporary worker and that you are on the list, and that the Company, Petrotrin, depended greatly on the work of the temporary workers, or temporary labour who did an essentially permanent work. So, from my understanding, in my conversations with these people, who, the entire temporary employee system seemed to be very unjust. And so while they would have gone through their entire working career aware that they were

temporary workers, at least it was something to do. So, these are not people who had the job security in the first place, or who had any of the comforts that the Government sought to tell us that was rampant in Petrotrin, that everybody was comfortable and cushioned.

Now, Madam President, in the past few weeks she noted that life has been—because I really wanted this Motion. When this Motion was moved on November 27<sup>th</sup>, it was three days before the closure of Petrotrin. Petrotrin shut its doors on November 30<sup>th</sup>. Prior to that, what we had would have been assumptions. We assumed this is what life would be like after the closure of Petrotrin. We assumed these people would not be well off. We have made assumptions. Now, in January of 2019, we have had a few months, so they are no longer assumptions. This is their life, and Kalifa told me that life has been very difficult for her, and this is when we talk about—

**Madam President:** Sen. Haynes, you have five more minutes.

**Sen. A. Haynes:** Thank you, Madam President. This is why—and when you talk about millennials, and this is why I wanted to raise this one:

I have had to take two jobs, way below the value of my qualifications and experience. One of those jobs is CEPEP.

You see, when you are telling people to retool and retrain, you are not figuring out their—

**Madam President:** Sen. Haynes, if you are quoting, then you cannot quote and break and quote. It becomes difficult for the *Hansard* reporters in how this is reported. Okay?

**Sen. A. Haynes:** Yes, I am paraphrasing.

**Madam President:** No, no. You are not paraphrasing. You are paraphrasing and

then you are bringing in your perspective. So, either you paraphrase and then you put your perspective so that it is easily understood by the reporters when they are—

**Sen. A. Haynes:** No problem, Madam President, and I am going to quote directly from Kalifa here, who says:

The one thing that affected me the most was the vilification of Petrotrin employees, painting us as lazy and overpaid, and claiming that our salaries were the problem.

Because I have said that here. But these are the real people who have been adversely affected, and I really took pains to make sure I spoke to this Motion, because the Motion said that there have been people who are directly—that have direct adverse consequences. And when you hear these stories—and I understand that it may make some people uncomfortable, because, I mean, we had both Ministers who spoke today, tell us about their personal story. So, I thought it fitting to give the personal stories for those people who shared theirs with me.

And, as I close, Madam President, even if you agreed, even if you firmly agreed that the shutting down of Petrotrin was the right thing to do, and we do not agree with that, eh. But I am saying that if you are a person that agrees with that, can we not all agree that it could have been done in a way that the Government gave thought to the direct impact on how people would provide for their families, and how you would live post November 30<sup>th</sup>. And should we not have a legitimate expectation that when you come on TV and you present your graphs and your statistics and what not, you tell us realistically what is really being done for these employees? Because all the good things they have been saying that they have been doing, none of these people have benefitted from it. So there are thousands of

people shut out of the system and the Government is insisting is here and everyone can participate in.

So, Madam President, when you talk about making tough decisions, and you have to make tough decisions, there is a space for mature leadership, and there is a space for leadership that values the contributions of people like Ken, people like Kalifa, all these people who reach out to us, the people who contributed to the building of our nation. Mature leadership values that contribution, honours that contribution, and does not say, "Hey, retool and we will find a space for you somewhere else". Trinidad and Tobago is at a space where it needs a Government who is aware that investing in the people of our country is the way to harness our growth. And this short-sighted and arrogant Government that is constantly blaming others, and who have not achieved a single thing in the four years and five months, [*Desk thumping*] cannot be the leadership, cannot be the leadership that we need at this moment. Thank you, Madam President. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. Paul Richards:** Thank you, Madam President, colleagues, for the opportunity to at least start my contribution to this Motion, as raised by Sen. Ramdeen. And it has been quite a protracted Private Members' Motion, and there are certain specific parts that I will deal with because I think that there are some parts, because of the length of time the debate has been ongoing, through you, Madam President, that parts of it may have become stale-dated. So, I will deal with two specific parts, including:

*"And whereas* it is evident that the decision of the Government was without stakeholder consultation and with little or no disclosure to the public;

*And whereas* the decision to close the Petrotrin refinery will have direct adverse consequence on thousands of persons as well as on the economy of

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Trinidad and Tobago;”

Madam President, let me start by quoting part of the UN Convention on Human Rights, and Article 6:1 with the section, “International Covenant on Economic and Social and Cultural Rights” states:

“The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone the opportunity to gain his”—or her—  
“living by work which he”—or she—“freely chooses or accepts, and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right.”

**5.40 p.m.**

“The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize”—that—  
“everyone”—also has the—“right to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work...”

And I say that in the context of the five areas which I will try to cover including unions; innovation and technology and productivity; governance and oversight and interlocking directorships; indecision and the cost of indecision; and the role of the media in transmitting effective messages to a population regarding extremely critical sectors and decisions.

And I think the closure of Petrotrin—or, sorry, the closure of the refinery of Petrotrin, let me rephrase that to be more accurate—is a great metaphor for—Petrotrin as a whole is a great metaphor for how great we can be as a people, Petrotrin itself, and also at the same time a metaphor of how we can collectively fail as a nation. And it is an interesting dichotomy because, at one point Petrotrin was the shining beacon for our economy and over several decades it has become an albatross around our collective necks. And it is very easy to apportion blame to several consecutive administrations for decisions of Cabinets and chairmen and

boards for where we find ourselves today. I am not an energy expert, so I am not going to go into whether it was a right decision or whether it was a wrong decision. It was a decision that was taken by the sitting Government and we are faced with the consequences of that and opportunities and there are positives and negatives to that.

Madam President, I just want to start by responding to a part of the contribution of my good colleague who I love to listen to, because she is always sober and tempered in her delivery, Minister West. And her commentary about millennials, which I know was referenced by Sen. Haynes, because I know a little about psychology, I know a little about education, I know a little about management, I know a lot about media. And I do not think it is a productive comparison of someone choosing to change jobs and someone losing their jobs suddenly or being retrenched. It is a totally different psychological dynamic. And any study you pick up, and my colleague Sen. Deyalsingh—who I am happy to have on one of the Independent Benches, because I understand we are nine, we are not one—will tell you that among the most traumatic events in anyone's life, if you are 10, 20, 30, 50 or 60, is either the loss of a parent or child, or the loss of a job, most significant, psychological, traumatic event in your life.

If you are changing a job and you decide that I want to change my job, I probably would have looked for another job or have opted to further my education. That is a personal choice. Being faced with retrenchment or termination is a completely different scenario. I want to quote from one of—several papers are available:

“The impact of job loss on family mental health”

Note it says family mental health. Because when a breadwinner loses a job, it does

not only affect the breadwinner, it affects the spouse and the children. In this instance it also affects, because of the magnitude of Petrotrin to our national psyche, communities and the country at large; in fact, the region, if I am not mistaken, and I think Minister Khan will support me on that—and it is by Silvia Mendolia, from 2010, updated in 2014. And the objective of the paper was to examine the impact of job loss on family mental well-being. And I will just quote quick parts because I do not want to belabour the point too much:

“Negative income shock due to job loss can affect the mental...”

—by your leave I can read a couple of lines, Madam President:

“the mental health status of the individual who directly experiences such displacement, as well as the psychological well-being of her/his partner”—and their children involved.

It has—“a significantly detrimental effect on life satisfaction, self-esteem and on the individual's perceived role in society. All these elements are likely to have repercussions on family members' mental health.

Results to date, show evidence that couples in which the husband experiences a job loss are more likely to experience poor mental health”—marital instability—“and the negative effect”—from this—“redundancy and from dismissals.”

We also can say:

“Secondly, the analysis of the impact of job loss on family mental health”—has a—“presence”—significantly on—“children”—and there is a greater—“demand for professional health care...”

It goes on to also state, and this is the part I really want to focus on: The low life satisfaction and poor mental health also have significant impact and there is

empirical psychological literature that also indicated that:

“Unemployment”—at this level—“generates a negative income shock”—that has a significant study—according to a—“study from Sullivan and von Watcher (2006)”—that mass layoffs have an impact on the country’s mortality rates, generally.

So at this level, at a national level we have to be very careful with these kinds of paradigms. And again, I am not saying it did not have to happen; I do not have—I am not an expert. But we have to be aware of these possible consequences.

“This is consistent with an initial increase in mortality from acute stress and long term increase in mortality from chronic stress resulting from permanently lower average earnings.”

—and also feelings of self-worth and not understanding or feeling a sense of where you are in society.

And I think we really need to be aware of that especially in light of the fact that we have information from the South Chamber of Commerce and other Chambers of Commerce that there has been a significant—and it has been going down for several different factors and variables—this past Christmas which is a bumper season for retailers, south Trinidad has seen a significant decline in sales. And this can be backed up by the Chambers of Commerce. And we have to be very careful with how this is managed.

I think one of the great challenges, Madam President, in terms of the Petrotrin situation, which we can learn from, is whether or not a sitting Government makes a decision as they see fit based on any sector and I fully agree with my colleague, Minister Le Hunte, that especially when it comes to state

agencies which may have been able to benefit from high revenues in decades gone by, it cannot be business as usual in these times and there has to be some level of restructuring for more efficiency and for more sustainability.

But we have to also be aware of the repercussions of this. And as I said at my opening, people have the right to work and when there is massive job loss in an economic environment like this, people really do not have a sense of where the next job is coming from in a competitive environment with younger people becoming more qualified in a glut in certain sectors. And I am going to deal with the technology aspect in a while.

So we really need to be careful with how this is handled from a messaging perspective. And I would add that the Petrotrin issue had been exacerbated by what I describe as extremely poor ineffective communication or an absence of an effective communication strategy knowing the significant impact this was going to have. We are in a contentious political environment in Trinidad and Tobago and I think the Government is very well aware of that. And there is a narrative emerging where it seems that the media is being blamed for either overtly or subtly being complicit in misinformation or propagating misinformation.

It is not the media's job to ensure that government messaging is resonating. It is the media's job to disseminate accurate information, a balanced approach in the interest of population and national development. [*Desk thumping*] Media has evolved to be a paradigm, not only in Trinidad and Tobago but around the world, where there are extremely aligned forces. There are media houses and personnel who are pro-government and we know them and there are media houses and personnel who are pro-opposition. Fact of life. There are some who are down the middle.

The paradigm of editorializing has become mixed now with what should be direct information and fact. It is being muddled. In an environment like this, it is even more incumbent upon the Government to be extremely clear about and consistent about information regarding decisions like Petrotrin and other state agencies. Because, I will quote—

Over the—and I have been listening to Minister Khan through you, Madam President, for several months now and he started, even when I had the honour of being appointed here, talking about the challenge facing the Government with Petrotrin. Every three months there was a subtle, not overt, because I am presuming firm decisions had not yet been taken. And I agree with Minister Khan in, when you are dealing with these kinds of scenarios you cannot be totally forthcoming because of the sensitivity of some of the information. However, I also agree that you have to have some kind of communication plan to mitigate the fallout, because it is going to come. And when you had first, only the people in the refinery losing their jobs, inconsistent with all of them. And you have an orator who is absent of emotional intelligence as the voice of it, it totally exacerbates the situation. And I am not going to call the name, we know who we are talking about. That did not help at all. As a matter of fact, it was insensitive and reckless at some points because of what it caused in the public domain. It muddled the Government's message. And the Government has to take responsibility for that.

Add TSTT to that, in September no decision had been made yet and it could have been a very valid disclosure by the Minister—December, 500 home. Inconsistent. And if you are going to have to take these decisions—I am not saying you do not—the messaging, the communication has to understand that and put systems in place to deal with that, because you are going to get the kickback,

because people are losing their livelihoods.

So I think the Government—and going back to the point about the media being used to propagate misinformation, the Government has a Ministry of Communications and if the message is not getting through about government policy and decisions then you need to take a look at your Ministry and how effective it is being operated. As we say, “plain talk bad manners”.

Madam President, I want to move on from that because I know I would not get through my whole contribution. Also referenced earlier on was the issue of productivity and the new companies Paria and Heritage, et cetera, that are expected to operate in a much more efficient manner. And many persons referenced the issue of technology earlier on and higher productivity and I was reading a book, because I am a book junkie, that there is a knee-jerk expectation that technology is supposed to destroy jobs. No it is not, technology is supposed to enhance productivity and efficiency if used properly. Jobs will migrate from one sector to the other. People do not pull bags on their backs anymore, they put it in cars now.

Just to quote a “Global Commission on the Future of Work”, prepared by the Second Meeting of the Global Commission on the Future of Work, by the ILO, Sixth Issue. And I think it was Sen. Vieira and Minister Gopee-Scoon who talked about the issue of jobs and the migration of jobs. And I tell you, there is a new study that shows that—I think you referenced, Minister, lawyers—and lawyers may be having to look for different types of employment. Well, they are telling you that now technology is saying that lots of studies, many studies are showing that, well, apps and computer-aided diagnoses are 87 per cent more accurate than actual doctors.

So doctors are now going to have to use technology because there is always

going to have to be the human touch. And current studies, according to the February 2018 article I just referenced, again, Second Meeting of the Global Commission on the Future of Work:

“...emphasize the disruptive nature of technological changes, stressing the potentially wide-ranging implications for job destruction”—and—“10 per cent of all jobs to a high of more than 60 per cent”—are estimated to be on the verge of being obsolete.

However, if managed properly by any jurisdiction, the jurisdiction is supposed to understand these are the technological advances is coming. We have to become more efficient to stay competitive as a country; otherwise we are going to—the sector is going to fall apart in that particular country.

**Sen. Khan:** What is scary about the AI now is the cognitive skills that are developing and that was solely in the domain of the human species until now.

**Sen. P. Richards:** Agreed. Thank you Minister for the intervention. Well, let me just go to that. And in one of the points of frequent reference in the history of—the seeming battle between technology and humans is when—and a lot of information now is realizing, is proffering that, well, it is not necessarily, it does not have to be so. Remember when ATMs came in in the 1970s, it was predicted that bank tellers are going to lose their jobs. You understand. No, as a matter of fact bank tellers just migrated to other functions within the bank making the interface between the public more efficient.

“In France, the Internet is thought to have destroyed...500,000 jobs within 15 years”—or it was going to, guess what?—“1.2 million new jobs”—came about, but the country planned for it.

So if you know sectors are, in terms of government policy going to be here in five,

10, 15 years you train your population along those lines. I know the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development has spoken about those alignments in the past, but I am not seeing it happen fast enough in Trinidad and Tobago.

So, we really have to be clear on where we are going as a country, what new sectors are emerging and, of course, the tech-sector is the big sector anywhere around the world and train our population, our human capital to take advantage of that and position Trinidad and Tobago with a comparative advantage in one or many of these areas. And some of the considerations where technological change needs to be envisioned and applied has been outlined in a couple of questions.

“What policies are critical for sharing technological”—what is described as—“technological dividends...and avoiding increased labour market polarization and income inequality”—in your jurisdiction?

“What policies need to be enacted to enable developing countries to reap the full benefits of the current wave of technological change...?”

Are we asking ourselves these questions as a country?

“...including...the services sector”—which is most benefiting around the world from the advance of technology.

And can be applied to Petrotrin in any other state sector.

“How can the current technological revolution be managed to improve the functioning of labour markets and strengthen inclusiveness?”—among different demographics.

Because very often in Trinidad and Tobago we look at the elderly as a liability and not an asset and we have to change our mindset to that because the elderly, those who are 60, 65, have a lot to offer and in other jurisdictions they are engaging technology and offering services from at home, increasing the overall productivity

of that jurisdiction in many areas. Are we looking at these kinds of innovative policy framework in Trinidad and Tobago? And finally:

“What measures need to be taken to mitigate the consequence of”—what is described as—“job destruction”—as a result of technological advances?

Let me add one of the concerns I have with the Petrotrin issue, is that Government's budgetary document states, a thrust to renewables. Well, let me tell you, the *Petrotrin Economist* put out a paper in 2017 called, “An Independent Analysis for Energy Leaders” and it is titled: “A Tailwind for Renewables”.

“Non-fossil fuel energy”—as I quote—“projects saw further momentum in 2018”—moving in to 2019—“thanks to falling costs and increased comfort with the technologies.

Renewable energies continued their upward growth trajectory in 2018, with falling costs and technological breakthroughs encouraging the uptake of non-fossil fuel energy sources.”

We still focused on Petrotrin, heavily, and not going into renewables.

*Jamaica Gleaner* December 12, 2017:

“The Caribbean's Largest Solar-Powered Plant For Jamaica.

“Ground is to be broken...at Paradise Park, Westmoreland”—in what has been—“described as the largest solar-powered plant in the Caribbean.”

We had fossil fuel energy that could have funded this decades ago and put us on a different footing, diversification in the energy sector. I knew we did it to some extent:

“The 37-megawatt facility is estimated to cost”—with investors—“US\$60 million (J\$7.5 billion) and is being built by a consortium of international and Jamaican partners.”

Closure of Petrotrin Refinery  
(Condemnation of Government's Actions)  
Sen. Richards (cont'd)

2019.01.22

When it is finished and operational the plant is expected to last 20 years and expected to save Jamaica \$250 billion over the 20-year lifespan. Because they realized, you know what, national security is also akin to energy security. And I know I am running out of time, but I will go in, if I can continue next time, to what the US and Canada are doing regarding fossil fuels and greener energy. So, you know, we really need to be more proactive and productive and forward thinking.  
[*Desk thumping*]

### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan):** Thank you very much, Madam President. Madam President, I now beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to Tuesday the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, 2019 at 1.30p.m. On that day we will be taking the Bill through all its stages, a Bill to amend the Administration of Justice (Indictable Proceedings) Act, 2011. That is the famous preliminary enquiries Bill.

**Madam President:** Hon. Senators, before I put the question on the adjournment, leave has been granted for two matters to be raised on the Motion for the Adjournment. Sen. Mark.

### State of TSTT

**Sen. Wade Mark:** Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*] Madam President, over the last few days Trinidad and Tobago, as a society, has been literally shocked and aghast with the horror headlines concerning the state of TSTT, a flagship company of this economy that we are all proud of. We have seen where a company has been mounting and accumulating losses, Madam President. And when we thought those losses were as a result of the workers and the overstaffing as we were told by the Minister who seemed to be lost in the sunset, we are now

discovering from the evidence that it was a result of many poor procurement practices, waste, squandermania and theft in that company. And, Madam President, you know who end up paying?—503 ordinary workers and another 50 workers at the managerial level and the Minister is in support of that.

Madam President, I want to just tell you what appeared in the *Guardian* headline; Thursday, January 17, 2019:

“TSTT denies whistleblower claims...”

Well, of course the TSTT, the people who are involved, the people who are being accused, they must deny. You cannot sit in judgment of your own cause. But that is what we are being told. But this came after a whistle-blower indicated questionable procurement practices and mega-million deals without board approval.

Madam President, there is another headline in Friday the 18<sup>th</sup> of January, 2019, *Guardian*:

“40,300 phones sitting idle in Miami warehouse  
\$500 million...deal gone sour.”

I would not go into the details of this story. We will do that with a Motion, a Private Members' Motion.

Madam President, I have another headline, Sunday January 20, 2019, *Trinidad Guardian*:

“Audits unearth major TSTT breaches”—questions raised about \$30 million deal with—“CellMaster”.

And that is what we are faced with.

Madam President, I have the audit reports, all of them in my possession, starting off—this thing is not now, you know, Madam President, mismanagement, corruption and almost criminal conduct has been taking place in that company, not

now. And, Madam President, you know we have a tendency and so on, I am not blaming a Minister here you know, there are things that are taking place in companies that Ministers are not aware of. And Ministers must not be coming out in defence of wrong things that are taking place in companies. [*Desk thumping*] And that is what my honourable friend has been doing.

**Madam President:** No, Sen. Mark.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Sorry, Madam President, let me withdraw that. I withdraw that, Madam President.

Madam President, I have an audit report from Ernst & Young and it deals with: Oracle ULA review, final report, April 18, 2016. This is a report that talks about TSTT management entering into a contract with—let me get the full name for you. I have it here. Fujitsu—at a price of what, US \$6.6 million without board approval. And this contract was entered into, by the management, when there was a subsisting contract with Massy Communications. And we now understand why the Government had to enter into an arrangement to buy second-hand equipment from Massy because Massy was about to sue them in this transaction. And they went and they bought out Massy Communications for \$250 million because somebody in TSTT entered into a contract with Fujitsu for almost US \$6.6 million, over \$42 million, or close to that, without board approval.

Madam President, we have another audit here involving one Mr. Daniels—

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark, you are giving audit reports but you are not giving the dates for the record.

**Sen. W. Mark:** The date is the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 2013, Madam President. And this deals—[*Interruption*]—yeah it does not matter, corruption is corruption. That is why I tell you and so on. For me, speaking for myself and the Opposition if you do the crime you do the time. [*Desk thumping*] I am not drinking “no bush tea for

anybody fever”. If you do the crime you do the time. That is what I stand for.

So, Madam President, this corruption has been taking place under the management of TSTT for several years and the Minister who is now in charge, maybe he is not aware, but I think he is sleeping. Oh sorry, Madam President, let me withdraw that. [*Laughter*] I think he is lost in the sunset. There is a book I want to recommend for your consumption, *Lost in the Sunset*. I will bring it for you, I have a copy.

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark, are you saying I am lost in the sunset?

**Sen. W. Mark:** Not at all, Ma'am.

**Madam President:** Okay.

**Sen. W. Mark:** You are very bright, like the rays of the rising sun. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] Like the rays of the rising sun, Madam President, very bright. Madam President, this audit involves a \$30-million transaction and it was done illegitimately and it was given to a particular company called CellMaster. And there is another thing called, I think it is Mizova, another company, Madam President, related to the same individual, some fella called Richard Smith who is the relative of Darryl Smith and millions and millions and millions of dollars are involved in this matter.

**6.10 p.m.**

Madam President, I have a third report—and I will be guided by you again. It is submitted to Mr. Ronald Walcott, Chief Executive Officer, from Randy Marcano, Acting Chief Internal Auditor, and the subject is: Audit Report on the Status of CT Miami Contract and SouthPark Mall, dated the 20<sup>th</sup> of June, 2018. Madam President, I have given you all the facts and the date on this audit. Madam President, this involves—

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark, your time is up.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Thank you very much, Madam President.

**Madam President:** Minister of Public Utilities. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Public Utilities (Sen. The Hon. Robert Le Hunte):** Madam President, the recent media reports about alleged improper procurement practices at TSTT relate to transactions on contracts which took place primarily in 2011 during the tenure of the last government, of which our goodly Sen. Mark was a government Minister—

**Sen. Mark:** No, no, no. May I correct the record, Sir? I was not a Minister. I was the Speaker. [*Crosstalk*] Please, please, please. Correct me properly. I was never a Minister.

**Sen. The Hon. R. Le Hunte:** I apologize—of which you were part.

**Sen. Mark:** I would not want to replace you, of course.

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark and Minister, both of you cannot be on your legs at the same time. Minister, continue.

**Sen. Mark:** Do not promote me, please!

**Sen. The Hon. R. Le Hunte:** I apologize, Sen. Mark—of which you were part.

**Sen. Baptiste-Primus:** The infamous Speaker.

**Sen. The Hon. R. Le Hunte:** However, it is my understanding that these allegations were investigated when they first surfaced by the UNC-appointed board of TSTT. I should point out that the TSTT official in question was also appointed during the tenure of the UNC-led administration, as the managing director. It is indeed ironic that these allegations, as I said, are surfacing at this time when the company has just completed a rigorous restructuring. Notwithstanding, I have asked the chairman of the company to provide me with a chronological report on this and to review the report and satisfy himself with the findings in light of any new information being put on the table, or any new matter being surfaced.

The chronological sequence of events are as follows: The whistleblower report was received on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March, 2013. The audit committee deliberated and provided a report on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June and looked at all of the evidence on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June, 2013. The audit committee reported to the board of directors and accepted the report on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August, 2013. The CEO at the time issued letters to the then acting EVP, confirming his appointment as EVP Mobile, dated the 26<sup>th</sup> of August, 2013. So confident was the position that he actually was appointed backdated to the 1<sup>st</sup> of December, 2012. The CEO issued the relevant warning letters to Mr. Walcott, dated the 4<sup>th</sup> of September, 2013, citing insufficient evidence on the allegations but also admitting that the transactions that were in question benefited the company.

The audit committee then reviewed the matter again, considered the positions taken by the CEO re the warning letter and deemed the matter closed on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March, 2014. These are the facts behind this matter and what has been brought in to the public domain. A lot of these allegations were brought before and it was dealt with by the board led by the then chairman, Mr. Snaggs. They were investigated, as I said. These matters have resurfaced, together with some new allegations, and I have asked the chairman to review any new information that may have come to hand outside of what it is; convince himself of the findings and the way or the methodology that was used, and to look the matter over. But based on the records of TSTT, this matter was thoroughly investigated and all appropriate actions have been taken. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark?

**Sen. Mark:** You have dealt with one matter, my brother, but I will come back to the next two.

**Wastage of Potable Water by Leakages**  
**(Government's Plan to Prevent)**

**Sen. Wade Mark:** Madam President, I want to raise with this honourable House the question of plans to prevent leakages of our potable water supply. We have been advised by the hon. Minister of Public Utilities that we have a rate of leakage which results in wastage of potable water amounting to some 50 per cent. So our infrastructure is extremely deficient, Madam President.

Now, we have to develop, as a nation, a proper plan, particularly in light of what I consider to be a severe warning from the meteorology centre—or the meteorological centre—where we were told in a headline which the Minister nor the Government has denied, on Tuesday the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, New Year's Day, headlined: "Brace for Heat". So we are expecting, according to all the predictions, a very hot and a very dry season which can have very serious consequences for the young, for the elderly and for those who are suffering with respiratory problems like asthma, in this country.

And, Madam President, this is happening at a time—it has already begun. If you are outside there in the daytime you will begin to feel the heat, and in the evening time if you do not have an air condition, you will also feel the heat at your home. So the temperature is rising. So, Madam President, I have raised this matter today against this emergency that is visiting our country that is supposed to last between January to April, May, even up to June of 2019.

And if we are experiencing massive water leakages because of poor infrastructural facilities and structures that we have in terms of the pipelines that transport the water, it is incumbent upon us to take action. And when I say us, we, as a nation, because water is life—water is life. And, therefore, it is incumbent that a plan be established, not only for households as it relates to how they should go

about conserving water, but it must be done on an overall basis in terms of the nation. And, Madam President, the Minister must be leading the charge in this direction by having an educational campaign to promote sensitivity amongst the people so they can understand that with 50 per cent leakages in the system, we need to take certain emergency measures.

And, therefore, I have raised this matter before people experience a heat wave in this country where people can die. There are instances where people die because of a heat wave.

**Sen. Baptiste-Primus:** In this country?

**Sen. W. Mark:** Not in this country but in other countries, so it is quite possible. And as you know, hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, the climate change that we are experiencing can take us in any direction because things are happening that sometimes we cannot even predict.

So, Madam President, I would like to ask the hon. Minister of Public Utilities to outline to this honourable Senate his plan and the Government's plan, to deal with the issue of this water possible shortfall where we have 50 per cent leakage, and in addition to that there is a heat wave that is visiting our island and our country at this time. And, therefore, what are the plans of the hon. Minister of Public Utilities? What measures are being taken? I know that some press conference was had and the Minister talked about a plan, but I did not see details of that plan. It is like the PNM. They keep talking about plans, and they have a plan, and they have a vision, but this Government just speaks and chats, but there no action. There is no manifestation. There is no realization. There is no transformation in terms of words into reality.

So, Madam President, I have—as I said, as a patriot—not a fake patriot, eh. I am not a fake patriot. I am a real patriot. [*Desk thumping*] I stand up in defence

of the working class, and the poor, and the ordinary people, and I do not link and go to bed, Madam President, with the oppressors who are trying to take advantage of the poor. I fight against the oppressors and the exploiters.

**Madam President:** Sen. Mark—on the Motion.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Madam President, so in terms of this Motion, may I indicate that there is urgent need for the hon. Minister of Public Utilities to share with us his plan and the Government's plans to deal with this water crisis that is emerging and how he intends to address this 50 per cent leakage in the system that is going to cause some problems for our population in the coming days and in the coming months.

I know you will tell me to take my seat so I am going to do that now. Thank you very much, Madam President.

**Madam President:** Minister of Public Utilities. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Public Utilities (Sen. The Hon. Robert Le Hunte):** Madam President, you know, I listened. I was trying to keep great attention to what the goodly Senator was asking, because somewhere along the line I was really wondering what it is, whether I was misinterpreting the question that was on the table, because the question that was put to me was the need for the Government to outline its plans to prevent the leakage of 50 per cent of the potable water. What appeared to be the question that he was also asking in the back of that there, was about what is the plan to deal with the prevailing drought that we are anticipating, coming out of the report from the Met Office. But being a patriot, I think, you know, I will attempt to deal with that one as quickly as I can and also deal with the other one, because I think it is important information.

Yes, we are facing a drought situation. Based on all of the information from the Met Office, it looks like it is going to be a rough six months. And if you look

at the present situation; you look at the present climate; you look at the indicators of what is happening in January, I will agree that it seems like it is on track. When we would have normally started the year with all of our dams up to full capacity, up to December 15<sup>th</sup> they were, but when you looked at the level of dryness that happened thereafter, you started January slightly below where you would have liked to start, in that, you were not 100 per cent, because you are already starting to see the effects.

We are talking to people in the desalination plants and what they are normally seeing with regard to the level of salt content in the water due to the evaporation, you are actually seeing it now, what they would normally expect sometime in May. So the effect is there. It is real and, therefore, we need to prepare ourselves for what could happen. Needless to say, if we have to plan, this is not something that—it is not unknown to WASA. WASA has dealt with this and they have gone through this in 2010; they have gone through it in 2015 and, therefore, they have learnt over the years in dealing with situations like this. The Met Office is looking at this particular situation and looking at it back to 2010.

So what have we started to do? Well, the pillar and the plan that we need to—and Sen. Mark, I really look forward to a full question where I could ventilate this in its whole time, because I have to get back to your substantive question, all right? We have developed a plan based on three pillars, all right? One, as you would recognize, 60 per cent of the water that we get is really surface water and, therefore, one of the things that is going to happen is that you are going to get a lot of evaporation, and therefore a lot of that water is going to be reduced.

We are therefore anticipating from about—we do about 240 million gallons of water a day, that that will probably come down to about 190. And, therefore, as a result of that, it is important that you make sure that you are firing on all

cylinders to keep that present production of water that you could get, making sure that everything is working well. You are going to lose what you have to lose, but you have to make sure we get water via ground water and, therefore, ground water is less affected by this environmental change. You are taking it from under the ground, and therefore, we are ensuring that all the wells are fully functional; are working.

There are about 28 wells that we have identified needed to be cleaned and ensured, and we have a programme that will have all of those wells up to date by at least the end of January/15<sup>th</sup> of February, latest. So we have been working—and this has been not now. We have been working on this from way back November in anticipation of what could happen, and therefore, we have a programme to make sure all of our wells—we also have some new wells that need to be drilled. And, again, in anticipation of where we are going to be, we have about eight new wells: north, south, two in Tobago, where we have identified their water and we are expediting those drilling programmes to bring those new wells on stream.

Finally, to keep production up to the level that we want it to be, the desalination plant becomes very critical, because if you would recognize, they produce about 40 out of 240. That is about 17 per cent. But if you are down to 190, the desalination plant has to keep as to—and they are producing 40, then it is more like about 20 per cent/23 per cent. Over the past few months we have had some problems. The desalination plant has worked very well for us before, 99 per cent up time. Last year they were down to 95 per cent, still within good standards, but we want to get them up to 99 per cent.

We have visited them; spoken to them; looked at their contingency plans; ensured that they have all their materials and all their different spare parts, so that if the plant goes down, it is not going to go down for any length of time. In

addition to that, they were also working on enhancing their technology, and previously, during this period, they would have had problems even to maintain 40. Because of some new enhancements that they have put in place, they are now in a position to raise their production if need be, from 40 to at least up to 43. So based on ensuring that we are shooting and firing on all guns as it relates to the production of water, we feel fairly confident that we would be able to maintain production of water from about the 190 up to over 200 million gallons of water a day. So that is one thing that we are doing, and that is in that particular area.

Of course, the second area comes to the whole idea of non-revenue water. And, yes, we have a problem in Trinidad. We have old infrastructure. This is not something of 50 per cent of the water being lost now; this is something that has been with us for a very long time. Now, when I talk about non-revenue water, it is really about non-accountable water. It is two things that make up the non-revenue water. One, leaks, and two, of course, people who are stealing water—unaccountable water. We are producing it but we cannot account for it. And, therefore, we are looking at it from two fronts. In the case of the latter, right now we had—and we started that since December until the end of January, there is an amnesty asking all individuals who are presently stealing water; come, register, and we have had a whole host of individuals. And we are bringing them on stream and trying to make sure that we regularize that situation by the end of the month.

Now, in addition to that, you want to try to minimize the amount of water that you are losing as a result of leaks. Therefore, one of the things—again, what we have done, you probably would have heard about the Israelis—the company from Israel that is down here. They, again, with the assistance of the IDB, are conducting a pilot project at the IDB's cost, using technology on this side of the world for the first time—

**Madam President:** Minister, you have one more minute.

**Sen. The Hon. R. Le Hunte:**—right? And they are looking at identifying leaks that are not on the surface. So we are trying to see if we could—and they have helped us in using the northwest and Tobago in identifying a number of leaks that are big leaks that are not on the surface. The fixing of those leaks will go a long way in helping us to reduce the NRW. We have also increased the number of teams that we have out there dealing with leak repairs and so forth.

Finally, there is the whole idea of public awareness and managing demand. The problem is—the reality is, for those who get water, our consumption of water is almost twice as much as anywhere else in the world because people live on about 44 litres of water, and our standard in Trinidad is more like 88 to 102. So, therefore, our demand—it is called a whole aspect of demand management, and we have done a lot of public awareness in that particular area.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Senate adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 6.32p.m.*